IN DICKENS'S LONDON

F. HOPKINSON SMITH

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BY

F. HOPKINSON SMITH

ILLUSTRATED WITH
CHARCOAL DRAWINGS
BY THE AUTHOR

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FOREWORD

THE author begs to express his indebtedness to the several authorities who have made a close and intimate study of the life and work of the man whom we all love. Notably to his friend the late Laurence Hutton, for his "Literary Landmarks of London," to Hare's "Walks in London," Taylor's "Historical Guide to London," Lucas's "A Wanderer in London," Francis Miltoun's "Dickens's London," J. Snowden Ward's and Katherine B. Ward's "The Real Dickens Land," and John Forster's "The Life of Charles Dickens."

He would also extend his grateful thanks to his friend Mr. Charles Sessler of Philadelphia for permission to include among his illustrations fac-similes of the rare letters, photographs, and souvenirs now in his possession, and here for the first time given to the public.

F. H. S.

INTRODUCTION

AN apology for adding another page to the overwhelming mass of printed matter laudatory of the genius of Charles Dickens is perhaps necessary. Mine is personal. For a long time I have wished to discharge something of the obligation I have always owed him for the pleasure he has given me. And since in my searches about London I have found how little is left of what was made famous by his pen, another wish has grown — that of recording, before it is too late, the aspect of some of the few remaining inns, bridges, streets, courts, and houses in which he and his characters played their parts. That their demolition is going steadily on was made apparent to me in the summer of 1912, when I was engaged in a hunt for similar relics identified with the pen of Mr. Thackeray. And as these two great writers were contemporaries, my eager footsteps covered much of the ground they utilised in common.

That I may have reproduced nothing unknown to the lovers of Mr. Dickens is true; nor have I made record of everything that is left, much of it lying outside the range of my medium, a charcoal demanding above all else the quality of the picturesque. Then, again, London is far too big, and Mr. Dickens's pen was far too fertile for any one man to crowd into a single volume a tenth of its area or a tithe of his characters and their haunts.

INTRODUCTION

What I have most enjoyed in this labour of love has been the expressing in another form and through another medium than those used by my fellow-craftsmen, the wonderful velvet blacks, soft vapoury skies, and streaming silver-washed streets of London — an easy matter for any enthusiast, for London is charcoal, and charcoal is London.

And so I tender to you, my readers, in all humility not another book about Mr. Dickens with illustrations by the author, but a book of illustrations with some explanatory extracts from the Master's text, padded with some experiences of my own.

F. Hopkinson Smith.

Exchange Place,
New York, August, 1914.

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IN DICKENS'S LONDON

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CHAPTER I

"GEORGE INN," WHERE MR. PICKWICK FIRST MET SAM WELLER

"'SAM!'

"'Halloo,' replied the man with the white hat.

"'Number twenty-two wants his boots.'

"'Ask number twenty-two, vether he'll have 'em now, or vait till he gets 'em,' was the reply.

"'Come, don't be a fool, Sam,' said the girl, coaxingly, 'the gentleman wants his boots directly.'

"'Well, you *are* a nice young 'ooman for a musical party, you are,' said the boot-cleaner. 'Look at these here boots — eleven pair o' boots; and one shoe as b'longs to number six, with the wooden leg. The eleven boots is to be called at half-past eight and the shoe at nine. Who's number twenty-two, that's to put all the others out? No, no; reg'lar rotation, as Jack Ketch said, ven he tied the men up. Sorry to keep you a-waitin', Sir, but I'll attend to you directly.'

"Saying which, the man in the white hat set to work upon a top-boot with increased assiduity.

"There was another loud ring; and the bustling old landlady of the White Hart made her appearance in the opposite gallery.

"'Sam,' cried the landlady, 'where's that lazy, idle — why Sam — oh, there you are; why don't you answer?'

"'Vouldn't be gen-teel to answer, 'till you'd done talking,' replied Sam, gruffly.

"'Here, clean them shoes for number seventeen directly, and take 'em to private sitting-room, number five, first floor.'

"The landlady flung a pair of lady's shoes into the yard, and bustled away.

"'Number 5,' said Sam, as he picked up the shoes, and taking a piece of chalk from his pocket, made a memorandum of their destination on the soles — 'Lady's shoes and private sittin' room! I suppose *she* didn't come in the vaggin.'

"'She came in early this morning,' cried the girl, who was still leaning over the railing of the gallery, 'with a gentleman in a hackney-coach, and it's him as wants his boots, and you'd better do 'em, and that's all about it.'

"'Vy didn't you say so before?' said Sam, with great indignation, singling out the boots in question from the heap before him. 'For all I know'd he vas one o' the regular three-pennies. Private room! and a lady, too! If he's anything of a gen'lm'n, he's vurth a shillin' a day, let alone the arrands.'"

No smart young chambermaid called to me from over the balustrade of the upper sleeping gallery when I alighted from a hansom in the courtyard of this same inn, known then and now as "George Inn," and gazed about me this morning in June — nor did any bustling old landlady make her appearance on the opposite gallery.

GEORGE INN—It was over this balcony that the maid asked Sam Weller for No. 10's boots, and received the historic answer, "Vill he have 'em now or vait till he gits 'em?"

There was a maid, of course, who might, and possibly did, cajole all the subsequent Sam Wellers of her time; and there was a landlady — a most cheery and comforting landlady, as I afterward discovered — who on hearing the sound of wheels peered at me through the quaint panes of a low-sashed window, her hand busy with a pewter mug held close to a wooden spigot; and there was the usual collection of thirsty men lounging outside the tap-room door, awaiting their turns — all charming and delightful reminders of what could have been found in this same old hostelry when gigs and chaise-carts were wheeled up in the courtyard, and boys in smock frocks lay asleep on the straw, but not entirely convincing to a man who had crossed three thousand miles of water to make real a dream of his boyhood.

What did interest me — interest me enormously — was the hostelry itself — particularly that part of the sleeping gallery from which the musical chambermaid shouted to the boot cleaner in the sleeve waistcoat with blue-glass buttons. But for a coat of paint applied every twenty years or so, and the bracing up of a snaggle-toothed balustrade, it is precisely as Mr. Dickens saw and described it seventy-five years ago in his immortal "Pickwick." "There are in London," he says, "several old inns, once the headquarters of Celebrated Coaches in the days when coaches performed their journeys in a graver and more solemn manner than they do in these times." Whereupon he gave to a listening and uproarious world — and they are still laughing over it — a full and unabridged account of the scene with which this chapter opens.

And a wonderful old inn it is even now, its front in two connecting sections — each bracing the other, their shoulders

touching. Seen from one end, in foreshortened perspective, it presents a continuous wabble from sill to eaves, its roof-line sagging, its chimney out of plumb, the shorter flues climbing up on the taller ones as if struggling for better air, the wonder being that it had not long ago lost all heart, and sunk into hopeless ruin. Looked at close by, however, say from beneath the chambermaid's gallery, it resolves itself to your glad surprise into quite another kind of rookery, putting to flight all your first conclusions; the same sort of surprise that comes to a man who, having made up his mind to ignore some approaching shabby person, finds himself bowing and scraping when he gets near enough to look into the kindly eyes and reassuring face of the misjudged individual.

It did not take me many minutes to change my own opinion of "George Inn."

Here was a welcome, inviting door, though its top sill was so low that off would go your hat if you forgot to stoop politely when you crossed its threshold, while the cosy little hall was so narrow that a trunk must go endways before it could reach the stairs that led to the bedrooms above. Here within a few feet of the door was a jolly little snuggery, made bright with pewter and glass and inviting easy chairs — one or two; a table, and a barmaid — the whole redolent of the fumes of old Pineapple rum — the snuggery, of course, not the barmaid.

Here, too, within reach of the rummery, was a coffee-room, its yard wall lighted by a line of windows propping up a smoke-dried ceiling, their rays falling on a row of white-clothed tables, framed in settles, with pew backs — so high that the fellow in the next pew could by no possible stretch of

his neck discover what the fellow in the adjoining pew was having for dinner — unless, of course, he stood on the settle and looked over the top — an unheard of liberty in so well-bred an inn as the "George." And here, scattering every last doubt, was a fireplace before whose cheery blaze hundreds and thousands of shivering shins had been toasted; and a mantel scratched and scarred by the bottoms of countless Tobys that had awaited the thawing out of the countless shins; and there were big, easy, fiddle-backed chairs, with and without arms; and an old, a very old and a very odd clock, one with a history which will be told later on, — as big as a coffin, this clock, and shaped the same, — to say nothing of papers, books, pipes, writing materials, old prints, rare china, rare plates:—Yes, a most wonderfully inviting and welcoming coffee-room, — so cosy and comfortable that once you were inside you would never want to get out, and once you were out you would be unhappy until you could again order "a fresh mug of 'alf-and-'alf, my dear, a brace of chops with a kidney, and, if you don't mind, a mealy with its jacket on."

This was my own order, and the landlady herself took it — and the seat beside me — and occupied it at short and long intervals, depending on her duties, after the meal had been served and before it had been eaten.

She was delightful in her talk.

She had told the story, no doubt, to hundreds of others, but it was none the less grateful to my ears. Every line that Charles Dickens had written which in any way made reference to the "George" was stored away in her memory.

"He often came here," she said with a proud toss of her

head, "long after the 'Pickwick Papers' were written, so men who knew him have told me. You see, he lived not very far from here when he was a boy — over in Lant Street, near Guy's, and this old courtyard was one of his favourite resorts. That was his table over by the window. The Dickens' Fellowship Club located it for me. They come every year and have dinner — generally on his birthday — and then it's nothing but 'Mr. Dickens' all over the place."

It was easy to follow her — I had only to suggest a name or an incident and she was off. And she was good to look at as she talked — a hearty, well-built, alert woman, ruddy and strong, with an air about her of being in charge, of letting nothing in the management of the house slip by unnoticed, and of always being concerned about your comfort.

"I should so love to have seen him," she continued. "I've seen a lot of men in my time (she is still single) but there is no one I'd rather have met than Mr. Dickens, and I've been here nearly thirty-five years."

I made an incredulous movement with my eyelids, and in explanation suggested:

"You must have been a child when you came."

"No," she laughed, "I was in my best dancing days."

That is as near as I came to her age, but I can say confidentially, whatever it was, "she didn't look it."

"When you finish your coffee come up-stairs with me," she broke in again, removing a Cheshire cheese as big as a bandbox in answer to a call for a portion of its contents from the next pew, "and I'll show you the room where Miss Wardle passed the night when she ran off with Alfred Jingle, and the room where Mr. Perker settled the affair for one

COFFEE-ROOM, GEORGE INN—Where Mr. Pickwick first met Sam Weller when Mr. Wardle went in search of Jingle and Miss Wardle

hundred and thirty pounds of Wardle's money, and where Sam Weller first met Mr. Pickwick."

"And the English-speaking race as well," I added.

"And the English-speaking race as well," came the echoing laugh. "It's just over our heads."

"If you had your 'Pickwick' with you," she said, my coffee finished, "you'd find that nothing has been changed in the bedroom." This came with a sort of reproof. Not to put a copy of "Pickwick" in one's pocket when visiting the "George" was like being in Westminster Abbey during morning service without a prayer-book.

I followed her up-stairs, strode into the famous room, and looked about me. Nothing was changed so far as my own memory served, and I had reread the passages the night before. The bed with its high posts and the short flight of steps leading to its mattress and pillows were still in place — just the kind of bed the famous spinster would have rejoiced in — dreaming dreams of her wedding on the morrow. And so were the chairs and the big rocker and rag-carpet rug and large fireplace, with its appropriate fittings.

I could even hear old Wardle's voice denouncing the scoundrel, and smooth Perker's cautious reminders, and Mr. Pickwick's bland inquiry regarding the nature of the compromise offered by "Mr. Perker of Gray's Inn," when:

"Old Wardle opened the door; and the whole three walked into the room just as Mr. Jingle, who had that moment returned, had produced the licence to the spinster aunt.

"The spinster uttered a loud shriek, and, throwing herself in a chair, covered her face with her hands. Mr. Jingle crumpled up the licence, and thrust it into his coat-pocket.

The unwelcome visitors advanced into the middle of the room.

"'You — you are a nice rascal, ar'n't you?' exclaimed Wardle, breathless with passion.

"'My dear Sir, my dear Sir,' said the little man, laying his hat on the table. 'Pray, consider — pray. *Scandalum magnatum*, defamation of character, action for damages. Calm yourself, my dear Sir, pray ——'

"'How dare you drag my sister from my house?' said the old man.

"'Ay-ay-very good,' said the little gentleman, 'you may ask that. How dare you, Sir? — eh, Sir?'

"'Who the devil are you?' inquired Mr. Jingle, in so fierce a tone, that the little gentleman involuntarily fell back a step or two.

"'Who is he, you scoundrel?' interposed Wardle. 'He's my lawyer, Mr. Perker, of Gray's Inn. Perker, I'll have this fellow prosecuted — indicted — I'll — I'll — damme, I'll ruin him. And you,' continued Mr. Wardle turning abruptly round to his sister, 'you, Rachael, at a time of life when you ought to know better, what do *you* mean by running away with a vagabond, disgracing your family, and making yourself miserable. Get on your bonnet, and come back. Call a hackney-coach there, directly, and bring this lady's bill, d'ye hear — d'ye hear?'

"'Cert'nly, Sir,' replied Sam, who had answered Wardle's violent ringing of the bell with a degree of celerity, which must have appeared marvellous to anybody who didn't know that his eye had been applied to the outside of the key-hole during the whole interview.

"'Get on your bonnet,' repeated Wardle.

"'Do nothing of the kind,' said Jingle. 'Leave the room, Sir — no business here — lady's free to act as she pleases — more than one and twenty.'

"'More than one-and-twenty!' ejaculated Wardle, contemptuously. 'More than one and forty!'

"'I a'n't,' said the spinster aunt, her indignation getting the better of her determination to faint.

"'You are,' replied Wardle, 'you're fifty if you're an hour.'

"Here the spinster aunt uttered a loud shriek, and became senseless.

"'A glass of water,' said the humane Mr. Pickwick, summoning the landlady.

"'A *glass* of water!' said the passionate Wardle. 'Bring a bucket, and throw it all over her; it'll do her good, and she richly deserves it.'

"'Ugh, you brute!' ejaculated the kind-hearted landlady. 'Poor dear.' And with sundry ejaculations, of 'Come now, there's a dear — drink a little of this — it'll do you good — don't give way so — there's a love,' &c., &c., the landlady, assisted by a chambermaid, proceeded to vinegar the forehead, beat the hands, titillate the nose, and unlace the stays of the spinster aunt, and to administer such other restoratives as are usually applied by compassionate females to ladies who are endeavouring to ferment themselves into hysterics.

"'Coach is ready, Sir,' said Sam, appearing at the door.

"'Come along,' cried Wardle. 'I'll carry her down stairs.'"

All of this harrowing scene had taken place in the little and bigger room — none of them are very big — through which I was then sauntering, the landlady pointing out each bit of furniture as real to her as if Wardle himself had sent them to her with his compliments. Not the rooms, remember, in which the above events *were supposed* to have taken place, nor the room in which various admirers of Mr. Dickens believe they *might* have taken place, but the rooms in which they really *did take place.*

And here it will be just as well for me to inform my reader that if he entertains the slightest doubt of the truth of this and similar statements, and feels disposed to accentuate these doubts by indulging in loud and contemptuous pooh-poohs, he might better puff them all out at this first chapter, and then close the book, for he will be treated to no other point of view should he continue to the end.

Not to believe that Sam Weller and Pecksniff and David Copperfield, Peggotty, Little Dorrit, Micawber, Tom Pinch, and Oliver, and all the rest of them lived and moved and had their being, would be like doubting that Santa Claus, Robinson Crusoe, and Peter Pan ever lived.

As proof of the verity of the elopement incident, it may be said that if the high-post bedstead, steps, and fireplace in the room I have just described are not convincing, what shall be thought of the set-up-on-end coffin-shaped clock below stairs, which struck the hours while the timid fluttering creature slept, which has ticked away from the same corner of the coffee-room ever since, and to which the landlady had called my special attention.

"Yes, long before my day," she observed, as on our re-

turn to the coffee-room she caught my scrutinising glance. "Only a few of them left in the Borough or anywhere else. You see in the old days the government put a wicked tax on clocks, so high that the people refused to pay, and these old timepieces were put up in the publics so that you got your time with your mug of beer. Here is an old book will tell you about it."

I opened at the page and read that:

"In 1797 a tax was imposed upon all persons in respect of the possession and use of clocks as well as watches. . . .

"Although the imposition of the obnoxious tax paralyzed the Horological trades it had the effect of creating one new kind of time keeper for tavern keepers anticipating a scarcity of time keepers among individuals, who with one mind seem to have adapted a bold mural time piece for the benefit of those who visited their public rooms.

"These 'Act of Parliament' clocks as they were called, had a large dial of wood painted black with gilt figures, not covered by a glass and a trunk long enough to allow for a second pendulum."

"And it's a fine old clock, I want you to know," she continued, taking the volume from my hand; "never loses a minute. Bad thing for me if it did — my first breakfast is at four o'clock in the morning for the market-men, and they'd swear awful if it was ten seconds behind time."

My own glances were not the only ones directed toward the old timepiece. Luncheon was at twelve, and the boiled mutton, boiled cabbage, and boiled potatoes — all excellent dishes — were hottest and therefore more palatable at this precise hour; a fact well known to each habitué, whose first

act on entering was to consult its round moon-face, dragging out his own ticker for confirmation.

Soon each seat was occupied. The various groups were, apparently, intimate friends, judging from the chaff which sifted my way over the pew back.

One of the old habitués, catching sight of my easel, stool, and charcoal box, had stopped long enough in the snuggery to interview the barmaid as to my identity, nationality, and general purposes in life, as I afterward discovered when a brother habitué who had overheard the inquiry, and who was stuffed with statistics backed up to my table and began to unload.

"Jolly old place, isn't it? Lot of lies told about it, too. Most people think this is the inn Dickens had in his mind when he wrote 'Pickwick'; well, it wasn't, you know. It was the White Hart Inn, not a great ways from here, near Guy's Hospital. That was where Sam Weller blacked the boots. It was one of the old coach inns, with galleries and rooms just like this; but, you see," and a chuckle escaped him, "it was pulled down some thirty years ago. Both of them date back to the sixteenth century. Take my advice and don't let anybody fool you about this being Sam Weller's Inn, for it isn't."

"There you go, Blodgers, letting out your ignorance," chimed in another habitué, an old fellow with a ruddy face and grey side-whiskers. "I wouldn't pay any attention to him if I were you, Sir. He's been at that sort of talk now for ten years — ever since he's been having his meals here. You're eating in the very box where Mr. Dickens sat when he told my father how he came to pick this inn out instead of the

White Hart, although he called it the White Hart. And he showed my father the very room where the Jingle event took place. Mr. Dickens lived over here in the Borough, and if you look through his books you'll find more than half of them have something to say about Southwark. He knew every inn within a mile of here. The 'Ship and Shovel,' for one, back of Guy's Hospital. Excuse my crowding in, but I know Blodgers and what harm he can do once he gets loose."

"They've been coming here for years," whispered the landlady, "and I never saw any two of 'em agree on anything, and you couldn't pull 'em apart with a bootjack, they're so fond of one another."

With the gooseberry tarts (it was the gooseberry-tart season) the coffee was brought in, and then a round jar of "Special Mixture," and some long pipes, and last the backgammon-board — all helps to digestion.

It was past two o'clock and my sketch finished, when they separated, and even then, three or four dropped into the snuggery and had a word and a nip with the barmaid.

"No wonder," I said to myself, remembering the rush hour at Delmonico's, within a stone's throw of where I now sit and write, "no wonder that these Englishmen ride to hounds at eighty years of age."

CHAPTER II

IN LANT STREET, WHERE BOB SAWYER HAD HIS LODGINGS, AND ONE OF HIS HAUNTS — "THE SHIP AND SHOVEL"

THE location of the exact house was not difficult. Mr. Dickens is still as well known and popular with the present residents of the Borough as he was in the days when, in the height of his fame, he immortalised their streets, inns, and homes. You have only to ask the barmaid at the public on the corner, or the man unloading coals, or the solicitor's clerk, or the secretary, or the Great Person himself. Any one of them will point out the very spot and indulge in all manner of reminiscences in which his aunt, or his father, or his partner's uncle played a prominent part.

The driver of the big team, seen in my sketch, was spokesman this morning.

"Where Bob Sawyer lived? Why right in front of ye. That's the house with the round-top door and white steps. I been living here for forty years and everybody will tell you that Bob Sawyer's house was the wery house in which Mr. Dickens lived when a boy. It's a school now, and if you don't believe it all you got to do is to rap at the door and the lady will tell ye same as me. And there ain't been no difference in my time 'cept that about five year ago she

put a new coat of white paint on the woodwork round the front door. If I don't miss my guess, there won't be another coat put on for five year more."

There was no disputing facts like these. Nor could I doubt the accuracy of the driver's identification. He was a resident and should have known — possibly did know — his neighbours. Had any doubt arisen Mr. Dickens's own statement would have banished it, so dull and expressionless was the vista that stretched before me.

"There is a repose," he says, "about Lant Street which sheds so gentle a melancholy upon the soul, that if a man wished to place himself beyond the possibility of any inducement to look out of the window, he should by all means select it as a residence."

That Mr. Bob Sawyer and his intimate friend Mr. Ben Allen had ignored these depressing possibilities, is well known to every one. Whatever of melancholy lay stranded on the outside of their domicile none of it was ever permitted within those hospitable walls, to which personages even as distinguished as Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tracy Tupman themselves were invited. That their welcome was bound to be cordial was indicated by a little pleasantry indulged in on the part of Mr. Sawyer when he thrust his forefinger between two of Mr. Pickwick's ribs and with native drollery inquired:

"'I say, old boy, where do you hang out?'

"Mr. Pickwick replied that he was at present suspended at 'The George and Vulture.'

"'I wish you would come and see me,' said Bob Sawyer. 'Lant Street, Borough; it's near Guy's, and handy for me,

you know. Little distance after you've passed Saint George's Church — turns out of the High Street on the right hand side the way.'"

To have refused such an invitation from such a host was out of the question. Mr. Pickwick would not only come, but it would give him the greatest pleasure to come, the occasion being celebrated by a "party" made famous the world over as "Bob Sawyer's party" than which there is nothing more delightful in the whole range of modern fiction.

Great preparations we are told had been made for this festivity. Mr. Bob Sawyer had himself purchased the spirits at a wine vaults in High Street; the punch was ready-made in a red pan in the bedroom; a little table, covered with a green baize cloth, had been borrowed from the parlour, to play at cards on; and the glasses of the establishment, together with those which had been loaned for the occasion by the public-house, were all drawn up on a tray: nothing, in fact, had been omitted which could in any way add to the enjoyment of the evening. And yet, notwithstanding the highly satisfactory nature of all these arrangements, there was no question that a storm was brewing in the domestic atmosphere. This could plainly be seen in the hurried movements of several small puff clouds, one of which was slowly settling over the countenance of Mr. Bob Sawyer as he sat by his fireside awaiting the arrival of his guests. Another, equally ominous, had swept in the direction of that gentleman's landlady, while a third was slowly enveloping Bob's companion and fellow lodger, Mr. Ben Allen, who after gazing intently on the coals, had remarked in a tone of melancholy, after a long silence:

LANT STREET, BOROUGH—In the house with the round-top door
Dickens lived when a boy

"'It'll be a deuced unpleasant thing if she takes it into her head to let out, when those fellows are here, won't it?' . . .

"'Horrible,' replied Bob Sawyer, 'horrible.'

"A low tap was heard at the room door, . . . and a . . . dirty slipshod girl in black cotton stockings, . . . thrust in her head, and said,

"'Please, Mister Sawyer, Missis Raddle wants to speak to *you*.'

"Before Mr. Bob Sawyer could return any answer, . . . a little fierce woman bounced into the room, all in a tremble with passion, and pale with rage.

"'Now Mr. Sawyer,' said the little fierce woman, trying to appear very calm, 'if you'll have the kindness to settle that little bill of mine I'll thank you, because I've got my rent to pay this afternoon, and my landlord's a waiting below now.' Here the little woman rubbed her hands, and looked steadily over Mr. Bob Sawyer's head, at the wall behind him.

"'I am very sorry to put you to any inconvenience, Mrs. Raddle,' said Bob Sawyer deferentially, 'but ——'

"'Oh, it isn't any inconvenience. . . . You promised me this afternoon, Mr. Sawyer, and every gentleman as has ever lived here has kept his word, Sir, as of course anybody as calls himself a gentleman does.' And Mrs. Raddle tossed her head, bit her lips, rubbed her hands harder, and looked at the wall more steadily than ever. . . .

"'I am very sorry, Mrs. Raddle,' said Bob Sawyer with all imaginable humility, 'but the fact is, that I have been disappointed in the City to-day.' . . .

"'Well, Mr. Sawyer,' said Mrs. Raddle, planting herself

firmly on a purple cauliflower in the Kidderminster carpet, 'and what's that to me, Sir?'

"'I—I—have no doubt, Mrs. Raddle,' said Bob Sawyer, blinking this last question, 'that before the middle of next week we shall be able to set ourselves quite square, and go on on a better system, afterwards.'

"This was all Mrs. Raddle wanted. . . .

"'Do you suppose, Mr. Sawyer,' said Mrs. Raddle, elevating her voice for the information of the neighbours, 'do you suppose that I'm a-going day after day to let a feller occupy my lodgings as never thinks of paying his rent, nor even the very money laid out for the fresh butter and lump sugar that's bought for his breakfast, and the very milk that's took in, at the street door? . . . Do you——'

"'My good soul,' interposed Mr. Benjamin Allen, soothingly.

"'Have the goodness to keep your observashuns to yourself, Sir, I beg,' said Mrs. Raddle, suddenly arresting the rapid torrent of her speech, and addressing the third party with impressive slowness and solemnity. 'I am not aweer, Sir, that you have any right to address your conversation to me. I don't think I let these apartments to you, Sir.'

"'No, you certainly did not?' said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"'Very good, Sir,' responded Mrs. Raddle, with lofty politeness. 'Then p'raps, Sir, you'll confine yourself to breaking the arms and legs of the poor people in the hospitals,' . . .

"'But you are such an unreasonable woman,' remonstrated Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"'I beg your parding, young man,' said Mrs. Raddle, in

a cold perspiration of anger. . . . 'But who do you call a woman? Did you make that remark to me, Sir?'

"'Why, bless my heart!' said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"'Did you apply that name to me, I ask of you, Sir?' . . .

"'Why, of course I did,' replied Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"'Yes, of course, you did,' said Mrs. Raddle, backing gradually to the door, and raising her voice to its loudest pitch, for the special behoof of Mr. Raddle in the kitchen . . . and, finding that it had not been successful, proceeded to descend the stairs with sobs innumerable, when there came a loud double knock at the street door: . . .

"'Does Mr. Sawyer live here?' said Mr. Pickwick, when the door was opened.

"'Yes,' said the girl, 'first floor.'

"Whether Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tracy Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass felt the chill of the gentle melancholy common to Lant Street, we have no means of knowing, but if any such depressing influences were abroad, they were at once dispelled when the two visitors ascended the stairs and paused for a moment to listen to the sound of voices within Mr. Sawyer's door, where they were received by Mr. Bob Sawyer himself, who had been afraid to go down lest he should be waylaid by Mrs. Raddle.

"'How are you?' said the discomfited student — 'Glad to see you, — take care of the glasses.' This caution was addressed to Mr. Pickwick, who had put his hat in the tray.

"'Dear me,' said Mr. Pickwick, 'I beg your pardon.'

"'Don't mention it, don't mention it,' said Bob Sawyer.

'I'm rather confined for room here. Walk in.' They had scarcely taken their seats when there was another double knock.

"'I hope that's Jack Hopkins!' said Mr. Bob Sawyer. 'Hush. Yes, it is. Come up, Jack; come up.'

"A heavy footstep was heard upon the stairs, and Jack Hopkins presented himself. He wore a black velvet waistcoat, with thunder-and-lightning buttons; and a blue striped shirt, with a white false collar.

"'You're late, Jack?' said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"'Been detained at Bartholomew's,' — replied Hopkins.

"'Anything new?'

"'No, nothing particular. Rather a good accident brought into the casualty ward.'

"'What was that, Sir?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"'Only a man fallen out of a four pair of stairs' window; — but it's a very fair case — very fair case indeed.'

"'Do you mean that the patient is in a fair way to recover?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"'No,' replied Hopkins, carelessly. 'No, I should rather say he wouldn't. There must be a splendid operation though, to-morrow — magnificent sight if Slasher does it.'

"'You consider Mr. Slasher a good operator?' said Mr. Pickwick.

"'Best alive,' replied Hopkins. 'Took a boy's leg out of the socket last week — boy ate five apples and a gingerbread cake — exactly two minutes after it was all over, boy said he wouldn't lie there to be made game of; and he'd tell his mother if they didn't begin.'

"'Dear me!' said Mr. Pickwick, astonished.

"'Pooh! That's nothing, that ain't,' said Jack Hopkins, to which Bob at once agreed. . . . 'Is it, Bob?' . . .

"'And now,' said Jack, when every one was comfortably seated, 'just to set us going again, Bob, I don't mind singing a song.' And Hopkins, incited thereto, by tumultuous applause, plunged himself at once into 'The King, God bless him,' which he sang as loud as he could, to a novel air, compounded of the 'Bay of Biscay,' and 'A Frog he would.'— The chorus was the essence of the song, and, as each gentleman sang it to the tune he knew best, the effect was very striking indeed. . . . It was at the end of the chorus to the first verse, that Mr. Pickwick held up his hand in a listening attitude, and said, as soon as silence was restored:—

"'Hush! I beg your pardon. I thought I heard somebody calling from up stairs.'

"A profound silence immediately ensued; and Mr. Bob Sawyer was observed to turn pale.

"'I think I hear it now,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Have the goodness to open the door.'

"The door was no sooner opened than all doubt on the subject was removed.

"'Mr. Sawyer — Mr. Sawyer,' screamed a voice from the two-pair landing.

"'It's my landlady,' said Bob Sawyer, looking round him with great dismay. 'Yes, Mrs. Raddle.'

"'What do you mean by this, Mr. Sawyer?' replied the voice, with great shrillness and rapidity of utterance.

"'Ain't it enough to be swindled out of one's rent, and money lent out of pocket besides, and abused and insulted by your friends that dares to call themselves men, without

having the house turned out of window, and noise enough made to bring the fire-engines here, at two o'clock in the morning? — Turn them wretches away.'

"'You ought to be ashamed of yourselves,' said the voice of Mr. Raddle, which appeared to proceed from beneath some distant bed-clothes.

"'Ashamed of themselves!' said Mrs. Raddle. 'Why don't you go down and knock 'em every one down stairs? You would if you was a man.'

"'I should if I was a dozen men, my dear,' replied Mr. Raddle, pacifically, 'but they've rather the advantage of me in numbers, my dear.'

"'They're going, Mrs. Raddle, they're going,' said the miserable Bob. 'I am afraid you'd better go,' said Mr. Bob Sawyer to his friends. 'I *thought* you were making too much noise.'

"'Now, Mr. Sawyer,' screamed the shrill voice of Mrs. Raddle, '*are* them brutes going?'

"'They're only looking for their hats, Mrs. Raddle,' said Bob; 'they are going directly.'

"'Going!' said Mrs. Raddle, thrusting her night-cap over the banisters just as Mr. Pickwick, followed by Mr. Tupman, emerged from the sitting-room. 'Going! what did they ever come for?'

"'My dear Ma'am,' remonstrated Mr. Pickwick, looking up.

"'Get along with you, you old wretch!' replied Mrs. Raddle, hastily withdrawing the night-cap. 'Old enough to be his grandfather, you villin! You're worse than any of 'em.'"

Whether the old fireplace around which the two cronies sat trembling is still intact behind the measly front I do not know, for I did not go in to see; but yet it must be! For if any ambition to renew or repair had ever inspired the dwellers within it must have long since died out in so dreary a byway as Lant Street; nor will it ever be again revived. Houses, like old people, dry up and crumble, and end at last with only a graveyard fence and a tablet giving their names and future prospects.

And now for another of Mr. Sawyer's haunts, for there is no doubt in my mind when considering that gentleman's partiality for the flowing bowl that the subject of my sketch — the "Ship and Shovel" — must have been one of our distinguished sawbone's resorts. Perhaps the ingredients of the punch when "ready-made in a red pan" came from behind its bar, or it might be that the glasses which had been "borrowed for the occasion from the public house" were gathered up within its precincts, as well as the tray itself — a foregone conclusion when one realises that the wall of the enclosure in which Guy's Hospital stands is opposite the inn itself, and thus but a step from the classroom to its bar, the dividing highway being known as Maze Pond Terrace — a short shadow-flecked street arched by feathery trees, its perspective melting into a mist of leaves.

I hope that its stretches of trees, shrubbery, and vines, their roots fast in the garden adjoining the "Ship and Shovel" and in the spaces surrounding Guy's Hospital, were as lovely in the days of that delightful young reprobate as they are now, but I cannot say. The tree trunks are not so

very large; the limbs and branches not so very long; the foliage does not grow so very high — all necessary data in determining the age of a tree. These may, in fact, be only the grandchildren of the trees under which Bob walked, victims of their surroundings, their limbs sawed off like those of many another unfortunate housed in the hospital grounds. It may be, too, that the exquisite shimmering vista of leaf and branch is only a kind of modern scientific growth, a sort of horticultural lobster-claw evolved out of the loss of its predecessor, and therefore all the fresher and greener, with more gleam and glint and grace of movement than the trees we see in most of the streets of smoke-choked London.

The landlord at the "Ship and Shovel," who had been catering for the doctors' mess for years before he moved over and took charge of the inn, did not know, as he explained in answer to my inquiry — he had found me at work and at once became friendly and conversational. He had never taken much notice of the trees, but if I would step inside — here he winked meaningly — he had some "particular old port" that he thought would warm the inner side of my shirt-front. It had had that effect on every doctor who had been graduated from Guy's these last thirty years, and did yet, for they all came back to see him. He would open a bottle if I would permit him, and serve it in the little room off the bar, and on the very table on whose top had been cut, with their own penknives, the names of hundreds of distinguished surgeons the world over.

I blew a spray of fixative from my atomiser over my charcoal drawing, unshackled my easel, and followed him into a little, kiln-dried, elbow-and-trouser-seat-polished cubby-

THE SHIP AND SHOVEL—Opposite Guy's Hospital, one of Bob Sawyer's haunts

room, just big enough for a small table and a dozen encircling chairs. Here, the bottle uncorked, he called my attention to the surgical operations performed on the table top; to the half dozen of old English mezzotints from drawings made of London Bridge during its construction, in 1830; and to the various souvenirs in the way of mugs, old china, and silhouettes of the several sawbones who had enjoyed his hospitality in this little ten-by-twelve box of a room.

Later on, as I sipped the port — and very good port it was (1849) — I scanned the cuts and scars of the table itself, and, not finding either the first name or initials of my friend Mr. Sawyer carved in its top, asked the landlord in all seriousness if he had ever met the distinguished man, a habit one falls into when engaged in my kind of a still hunt. He pursed his lips, consulted the ceiling, asked the full name, gave a cursory glance at the mutilated table top, as if to refresh his memory with the signatures, and remarked:

"I think I remember him but I ain't quite sure — we had a fellow here with a red head named Sawyer, drank Scotch whisky mixed with his beer — went to Australia, I heard. But maybe he's another man."

"That's very curious," I remarked in a hurt, sad way, drawing the bottle closer and refilling my glass. "I thought everybody knew Mr. Sawyer — everybody about Guy's. He graduated, of course, a good many years ago, but I can think of no medical man of his time who is so well known. I come from America, and his reputation has followed him there."

The landlord became interested and, I think, a little ashamed of his memory, unlocked a drawer, took from it a

well-thumbed, ink-stained account-book, and began running his finger down the index.

"S. Oh, yes — S — ! Sawyer, did you say. What's his first name?"

"Robert."

"Well, it would be under the 'S'——"

The finger-nail, guided by the knuckle-joint, had now reached the bottom of the page.

"No, it isn't here. Odd, too."

"What book is that?" I ventured.

"Oh, just a sort of log-book where I keep my accounts. When they pay I check 'em off. Some of them run along five years or more. Got three pounds ten from New Zealand last week. Thought the man was dead. Sawyer, did you say? Robert Sawyer. Maybe he is a lord by this time. Anyhow, if he had paid back what he owed he would be in this book."

"Don't look any further, my friend," I said — "not in a book of that kind. I am very sorry to have troubled you."

The door opened and one of Bob's fellow students blew in — an admirable expression when I consider the breeze he brought with him.

"This gentleman is inquiring about a man named Sawyer," blurted out the landlord. "Says everybody in the United States has heard of him."

Two eyes receded under two knitted eyebrows and a firm, set mouth became expressive of deepest thought.

"Sawyer — Sawyer — never heard of him. Before my time, I expect." Then he glanced at the bottle.

"Some of the old stuff, Henry? Don't care if I do."
And he did.
And so did the landlord.
And so did the stranger.

CHAPTER III

NUMBER 48 DOUGHTY STREET, WHERE DICKENS LIVED AND WHERE HE WROTE THE LAST CHAPTERS OF "THE PICKWICK PAPERS"

THE fronts, rear elevations, stoops, and area ways of the many homes in which Mr. Dickens had his sojourn would fill any ordinary-sized sketch-book, leaving no room for those that housed his characters: Portsea, where he was born; Chatham; Bayham Street; Lant Street; Furnival's Inn; Chalk; Doughty Street; Devonshire Terrace; Tavistock House; Gad's Hill where he died — their names are legion, to say nothing of the various inns, and the several out-of-the-way places which at different times sheltered him and his family. But I had only room for one of these homes, and so I chose that of No. 48 Doughty Street.

There was no question about its identity. His name was prominently displayed in the middle of the second panel, plain as print, in black letters over the door, or directly *on* the door itself, I forget which. The brisk young maid said the lady was at home and "Would I please walk into the parlour," which I did.

And a queer old parlour it was; full of everything a queer old parlour should have — a cushiony tall rocker — knitted tidy — haircloth sofa — and plenty of photographs sort of

a parlour — neat as a pin and as comfortable as an old slipper. And the landlady was precisely the kind of a landlady you would have expected to find in just such a parlour, with a soft, comfortable, English voice, coming to me out of the half-light of the room.

My story, to which she listened patiently, was the same that I have been telling these many years, whenever forced to invade the privacy of a family homestead, beginning with the statement that "I am a painter from over the sea" (here I extend my visiting-card), that "I have made bold to call in the hope that I might be permitted to make a drawing of the home in which" (here follows the title of the chapter covering the subject-matter of the sketch) — in this instance the house in which Mr. Dickens passed the first years of his married life and where, if I were not mistaken, he wrote the last chapters of "Pickwick."

"No, sir, you are quite right," she answered, "and I shall show you the very room out in the back yard where he finished the book. Oh, quite a tiny little place! And so you're from New York?"

She had been telescoping the distance lying between her spectacles and my bit of pasteboard, as she looked at me over their rims, and apparently satisfied with my general deportment, went on in a more cheery tone:

"Why, I don't see how I *could* refuse. I have so many Americans. Some of them keep their rooms for weeks. There are two here now." Suddenly she grew anxious, her eyes focussing me the closer. "You won't make any dirt or noise, will you, for our dinner hour is quite early. Some of my lady boarders use this parlour for ——"

I interrupted hastily to explain that it was the *outside* of the house which interested me, and that as for cleanliness, I was a past master in the art! No house cat stepped as noiselessly, no chambermaid ever used a dust-pan after my departure.

My own eyes by this time had become accustomed to the dim light of the room. A June sun was burning holes in the coal smoke outside, and the possessor of the soft English voice and gentle manner had, under the benign influence of its rays, now emerged from the gloom.

As I listened to her talk, studying her personality, I could understand how rich in literary material was the London from which Mr. Dickens drew his characters. She might have stepped out of one of his books, for she unquestionably lived in them. To describe her is impossible. A year has gone by since I saw her, and my memory has grown a little hazy — quite natural in London; but the impression remains with me of a certain done-up-in-lavender sort of an old lady, as if she had lived a good many years in one room and been folded up every night and laid away in a bureau drawer.

There were ruffles, too, somewhere — I think about her throat, and some kind of fluting at the end of two long white cap strings that rested on her thin shoulders; and small shrivelled hands and a quaint bend of her back as she leaned forward to hear me the better. Perhaps a woman of seventy, perhaps eighty, but very gentle and with a motherly touch about her, due, no doubt, to the care she took of the variously stranded young men who occupied her "three pair back."

No. 48 DOUGHTY STREET—Where Dickens boarded in 1837 and which he afterwards leased. Here he took his wife, and here her sister Mary died

There was a sister, too, or perhaps a niece — some years younger, not a great many, but some — who chimed in now and then. Rather a bustling, nervous, intense little woman in a shiny black silk, whose whole purpose in life seemed to be to save her companion any undue exertion.

"There," she interrupted, "you've talked enough. No, I'll show the gentleman the knocker. You'll have to get up, sir, and come over to the other side of the room, for it's screwed fast to the wall. It used to be on the front door when Mr. Dickens lived here, and would be there now had they not tried to steal it — not once, but half a dozen times — so we took it off and bolted it here inside" — she was caressing it now tenderly with her hand. "Just think how many times his fingers took hold of it! How often he came in late at night — forgot his key — and awoke everybody in the house! until they let him in! Not much of a knocker, as you can see — couldn't have cost five shillings when it was new — there were a dozen, no doubt, to be found just like it up and down this street — many of them are there now. But, you see, it made a great deal of difference whose hand touched it. Try a rap of your own on it, everybody does who comes."

The touch of my loyal fingers overlaid the touch of those of the long ago, and both ladies being satisfied with my devotion, the younger of the two in her rôle of protector laid her own on the old lady's wrist and said rather peremptorily:

"No, I'll show the gentleman the back yard. You've walked enough to-day. I'll just close this blind to keep the sun out. It's coming in now, and there's your shawl and

don't sit near the door where there'll be a draught. This way, sir."

I followed through the narrow, old-fashioned brownish hall covered with oilcloth, flanked with old-fashioned mahogany chairs, a jar for old-fashioned wet umbrellas in one corner and a hat-rack in the other, and passed out into a small, cramped, disheartened garden into which was thrust a begrimed, blackened, dilapidated back extension with one large end window — large in contrast with the dimensions of the wall in which it was set, as can be seen from my sketch — with the window wide open.

"Now, please come over here so you can see the end and the side wall and the roof. Now, right inside of that little bit of a box of a place — and it's only one room, as you can see — Mr. Dickens wrote the last chapters of 'Pickwick.' I can tell you just how big it is — it is only ten feet long and eight feet wide and eight feet high, and in one corner next to the hall where we entered is a fireplace, no bigger than a work-basket, holding about two handfuls of coal. His writing-table was moved close to this window, where he could look out onto the garden. Isn't it pitiful to think how he suffered when he was young?"

I looked about me, taking in the low brick wall dividing the burial plot in which I stood from the burial plot next door, noted the starved lilac-bush, robbed of most of its breakable branches by relic hunters, scanned the heaped-up garden bed — not a spear of grass, just heaped-up brown earth like a new-filled grave; counted the pale consumptive flowers, their drooping heads clinging to decrepit stalks and wabbly stems, and then, glancing at the sky, and the brave

sun fighting its way through the haze, suddenly remembered it was the leafy month of June. Just such June days were, perhaps, the only days in which he could have worked with the window up, days when some stray bird or lost butterfly might have wandered in, imparting a momentary cheer. But — and here came the chilling thought — what must have been that cramped box of a room in a November fog or a January thaw? He tells us all about it in "Our Mutual Friend." "A mouldy little plantation, a Cat preserve. Sparrows were there; cats were there, dry rot and wet rot were there."

My inspection over, the little lady in the shiny black silk began again:

"And this was not the least of his troubles in this house. His dear sister-in-law Mary died in that room over your head, just beside the roof of this extension. You can see it if you look up. Yes, the poor fellow had many, many troubles when he lived here, and yet during all this time, when his own heart was so sad, he was making everybody laugh the world over."

I thanked my very courteous and sympathetic guide, climbed back into my cab, and started to work not only on the front door, without the famous knocker — the one now in use is of bright brass — but its contiguous windows and upper iron balconies.

As I worked on, the several details of my subject took their place on my canvas — the modest sign telling passers-by that this was "The Dickens House" and the tablet affixed to the wall by the London County Council giving the years in which the great novelist occupied it. "The only one of

Mr. Dickens's London residences," says Miss Lang in her "Literary London," "which remains unchanged."

My sketch completed, I opened Mr. Snowdon Ward's delightful "In Real Dickens Land" — I had brought the book with me — and learned that Mr. Dickens moved from his small rooms in Furnival's, where "Pickwick" was begun, to 48 Doughty Street, where the book was finished, in March, 1837; that "at this time Mary Hogarth, his wife's younger sister, and Fred, his own next younger brother, were living with him, for even in the Furnival's Inn days he commenced that open-hearted hospitality, always beginning with the members of his own family, and which throughout his life was one of his great characteristics. It was a gay, happy, enthusiastic household," continues Ward, "working hard, laughing hard, and playing hard; always busy, always restless, and every member enthusiastically bound up in the happiness of all the rest. But a great shock and a great separation were in store for them. On May 7th the whole party had been to some entertainment and returned home in the best of spirits, when, almost as soon as they entered the house, poor Mary Hogarth fell back into Dickens's arms and died almost immediately. The terrible impression made upon him by this loss remained through all his life, and coloured many of his scenes of pathos." Her tombstone bears the simple epitaph written by Dickens — "Young, beautiful, and good, God numbered her among his angels at the early age of seventeen." The shock was so great that for two months the publication of "Pickwick" was interrupted. It was in this house, too, that Dickens's second daughter, Kate Macready, now Mrs. Perugini, was born in 1839. At the close of that

No. 48 DOUGHTY STREET—In this box of a rear extension—10 x 8 x 8 feet—Dickens wrote the last chapters of the "Pickwick Papers"

year the family moved from Doughty Street to No. 1 Devonshire Terrace.

That same afternoon I again made my way through the narrow hall and out into the mouldy little plantation and began work on the rear extension. The June sun had mounted high enough in the interim to send its rays over the next roof, throwing a long slant of light into the desolate yard, as a watchman manages the gleam of a bull's-eye lantern when in search of some mysterious prowler.

The elder of the two ladies, hearing my step on the oilcloth, rose from her armchair, felt her way along the narrow, dark passageway, moved noiselessly to where I sat, and stood looking over my shoulder to assure herself, no doubt, of my promises that no polluting touch of any kind should drop from my fingers. A moment later she crept back to the angle of the extension wall and settled herself slowly into a flat, drawn-out Chinese chair, with a ready-to-be-shaved attitude, her head tilted back, her slippered feet touching the end bar. The companion lady now brought out not only a newspaper but a parrot in a tin, circular cage — a red-and-green parrot with a topknot, white, horned beak, and an insistent voice. The paper she spread over the recumbent figure, which promptly went to sleep. The cage she deposited on the bricks on one side of the Chinese chair.

I worked on, the old lady breathing gently, the paper crinkling and readjusting itself to the dear woman's pulsations, the parrot regarding me all the time out of one yellow eye, ready to shriek out at any move on my part that would disturb the serenity of the sleeping figure.

Yes, there is no question that Mr. Dickens was greatly blessed in the variety, in the quality, and in the quantity of the various delightful characters living within reach of his pen.

CHAPTER IV

THE GEORGE AND VULTURE, MR. PICKWICK'S HEADQUARTERS WHEN HE STOPPED IN LONDON

THERE are nooks and cracks and crannies in London Town through which you can hardly squeeze your way with a wheel-barrow, let alone a cab or hansom. The little crooked turn to the left — a footway that leads to and fronts the George and Vulture — is one of them. Even with my easel and stool hugging the opposite wall and my feet drawn well under me, half the hungry and thirsty crowd on their way to luncheon stumbled over my toes. My surroundings were very much as if I had camped out near my own office in Exchange Place — say at its angle with New Street or opposite the members' entrance of the New York Stock Exchange — on a day when everything was "kiting."

To-day my easel was breasting a surging tide of telegraph boys in their tin-can caps tilted over their left eyebrows; perspiring brokers making calculations with their lips, their eyes on the turn of the street; lads in white aprons carrying flat baskets — portable luncheons, perhaps; porters with bundles; bank messengers with books; human drift from the slums; idlers; sightseers — a motley, congested, and ill-

assorted crowd swaying, stumbling, apologising, swearing, or staring as they came plump up against my foot or the leg of my stool. And yet, strange to say, not one of them called for the police, or threatened violence, or lost his temper. Only one passer-by, and he a Bobby, stopped long enough to touch his hat in respectful salute and remark:

"I shall 'ave to arsk you to move on, sir." But he never did "arsk," nor did he intend to. I got that from the way his forefinger touched his hat brim; from the tone of his voice and from the way he at once went off duty — off from my vicinity.

And I could not have moved on had he "arsked" me. I must either remain where I was, pasted up against the opposite wall, or my sketch must be abandoned; for this was the real, well-authenticated, unquestioned original entrance of the famous George and Vulture Inn.

Through this very door did Mr. Pickwick pass on his release from the Fleet, and a happy evening "it was" (so runs the chronicle) "for at least one of the party, and light and cheerful were the two hearts that emerged from this hospitable door the next morning, the owners thereof being Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Sam Weller," the former of whom was deposited inside the comfortable post-coach with a little dickey behind to which the latter mounted with great agility.

Later on, it will be remembered, they picked up Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Allen and started for Birmingham, via Tewkesbury, there to wait upon the elder Mr. Winkle on behalf of the younger Mr. Winkle, whose love-affair had gotten into a sad tangle.

THE GEORGE AND VULTURE INN—From which Mr. Pickwick and his party set out on their journey by stage to visit Mr. Winkle's

My sketch finished, my toes straightened out, the amiable crowd opened a way, and I, too, entered the busy, smoke-begrimed interior of the George and Vulture and sat me down at one of the tables.

A fat, puffy, rather greasy-looking waiter ambled up and laid the menu before me. It was the rush hour, and, as Lombard Street is one of the busiest centres in London, the alcoves were full and the whole interior a mass of hungry humanity. Eager men fringed the lunch-counters; the barmaids jerked away at the handles of the interlocking switches, shunting the beer here and there into this mug and that Toby; breathless clerks bustled in at one door, grabbed a sandwich, smeared its inside with mustard, shot over to the cigar stand, caromed back to the bar, tossed into their frames a pint of bass, and escaped through the main door into the street again, or pitched head foremost into the restaurant across the entrance hall, bearing on its outside window the inscription, in a half moon of gold letters: The George and Vulture.

For here it may be said that of late years this sly old eating-house not only leads a double life but lives by a double name. On the Lombard Street side it is known as the Thomas Chop House. On the other side — my side — it revives the traditions of the old days of the George and Vulture, as Tony Weller and his son Samivel always called it, and as does many another to this day.

The fat waiter was standing demurely, all the time suggesting various dishes.

"B'iled mutton and caper sauce, wery good to-day, sir." Or "maybe a cut of beef with a dash of 'orseradish and some

marrowfats. No? Well, then, sir, I should particular recommend a fowl with b'iled carrots and buttered sauce."

"Try a slice of Yorkshire ham grilled and a baked potato," suggested a man with a grey suit, whose plate touched my own, so narrow was the table. "From the States, I should think?"

There was no denying it; he had guessed right the first time. My American-English, as he afterward told me, had "given me away."

"I saw you at work, sir," he went on; "took a rather bad time, didn't you? *I* saw 'em climbing over your back. What's up? Working for the papers?"

"No, just making a sketch of where Mr. Pickwick had his quarters when he stopped in London. Bring the grilled ham, please, and a mug of bass" — this to the waiter, who bowed and backed away.

"Oh, that's it, is it; Dickens, eh!" resumed the man in the grey suit. "Well, it's all true. The club starts from here every year on that coaching trip for Rochester; same trip old Pickwick, Jingle, and the others made. You're going there, of course?"

I nodded in confirmation, adding my thanks for his suggestion regarding the grilled ham.

"Yes, you must. Don't forget to put up at The Bull when you go. They've torn this chop-house a good deal to pieces, all but the main doorway which you were working on, but you'll find The Bull about as it was."

My eye had been wandering around the room. "It doesn't look like the place," I rejoined, "that Mr. Pickwick would have picked out had he wanted to lead a quiet life."

He regarded me curiously.

"Got it that bad, have you! Well, maybe that's better than not believing in anything at all. Dickens has put about forty inns in 'Pickwick' and about forty more in his other books; this one goes back to . . . Here, John" — this to a waiter, making a combined Mercury and caryatid of himself, his tray held high — "when you dump that get me one of those little books. It'll cost a shilling," he added, turning to me, "but you'd better have it; it'll save you a lot of trouble."

He drew a brier-wood pipe from his pocket, knocked the ashes of his last smoke from its bowl, relieved a china pyramid of one of its matches, struck a light down the seam of his trousers, blew a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling, and continued:

"I've been coming here for ten years or more, and there's hardly a day that some Americans don't drift in. I can tell right away what they're after by the way they look around, taking it all in. Then comes the setback — I can see that, too. They've been fed up on this old George and Vulture business when they were boys, and what they expected to see was an old bungalow with sand on the floor and cobwebs on the ceiling and pewter mugs with dates and initials cut in 'em."

"Like the coffee-room at George Inn?" I ventured.

"No, like the coffee-room down along the river below Blackfriars. The George is too respectable. Besides, every ten years or so it gets cleaned up. Instead of a scrap-heap your countrymen find a place like what you see, with two doors always swinging, a mob of people, half of 'em standing up, beer signs, pickle signs, cracker-box signs, cigarette signs,

a lunch-counter, two bars with patent fixtures, three — Oh, there you are, John; now let's have the book. And there's a shilling for you, John, and another for the book; no, don't mention it; glad to give it to you. Now, let me see. Yes — yes, built long before the days of Queen Elizabeth, when it was a chop-house along with another known as Dolly's. Strype says (whoever he was) that: 'Near Ball Alley was the George Inn (not Sam Weller's inn), being a large open yard and called George Yard, at the farther end of which is the George and Vulture Tavern having a passage in St. Michael's Alley.'

"And now listen to this:

" 'Here in 1652 was set up the first Coffee House in London, in St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill, first known as Pasqua Rosee Inn but before and long since as the George and Vulture.'

"Oh! It's some inn, I tell you, or was. Addison came here, and so did Swift and Defoe, who wrote 'Robinson Crusoe,' and Gray, who wrote the 'Elegy'; old Pepys, who wrote the 'Diary'; John Wilkes, Hogarth, and later on almost every man of prominence in his time who loved a good dinner. A great old inn in its day, and would be now if they'd get over the idea of making money and settle down to a quiet life with a mug and a rubber of whist and a long-stemmed pipe."

I nodded assent, thanked him for his running commentary, waited a moment in the hope that he would add the Pickwick Club to the list of its distinguished patrons and, finding that he was entirely engrossed in relighting his pipe, jogged his memory with the inquiry:

"And how about Mr. Dickens? He has helped some, hasn't he?"

"Oh, yes, no doubt of it; light kind of fiction, you know, but it all counts in advertising, and ——"

"But the Pickwick party did start from here, didn't it?"

I am not accustomed to having my dolls disembowelled before my eyes — not without a protest of some kind.

His head went back with a jerk and a laugh rang out.

"Still at it, are you?" he cried. "Start from here? Of course they did. I'm not certain from which door; not from the one you came in and not from the one I'll go out, if this part of London was built up as thick then as it is now. Maybe the book will tell you and maybe it won't — you can read it later on. The fellow who wrote it probably didn't know, so he hasn't said. He's got the fiction part of it all right and the room in which Winkle slept, and the landlord, so I am told, still keeps the sheets and pillow-cases in lavender and he has locked up in his safe the pen and inkwell that Winkle used in writing his letter to his father. He'll show it to you if you ask him — that is, he *would* have shown it to you had you asked him in time. He's dead now — been dead over fifty years. Well, I must be going. I'm in the phosphate business. Be glad to see you any time you drop in. There's my card. Thank you, I'll smoke it to-night, after dinner. Don't forget to go to Rochester. You'll go crazy there. The Bull is just your kind," and he closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER V

THE BULL AT ROCHESTER, WHERE DOCTOR SLAMMER CHALLENGED MR. JINGLE AND MR. WINKLE WAS PUT TO BED

Not to have dropped one's luggage at The Bull, in Rochester, is to be counted outside the pale of good society. Half the nobility of England, to say nothing of distinguished commoners from every part of the Empire, have enjoyed its hospitality; and this dates a long way back, as can be seen from the many framed autograph letters addressed to Mr. Birch, once proprietor of the Inn.

In 1836 Their Royal Highnesses the Duchess of Kent and her daughter the Princess Victoria, — afterward England's Queen, — with their suite changed horses here on their way to Dartforth; "Each post boy to receive 6d. per mile, 11s. to be paid per pair for horses, including hostlers and toll gates."

In 1837 His Serene Highness the Prince of Leiningen ordered "two setts of four horses, *the Best* with careful drivers to change at the Rose Inn, Sitting Bourne."

On March 9 (no year) Mr. Tennyson ordered and occupied "a *well-aired* bed room (with dressing room) also a *well-aired* Sitting Room and fires lighted."

BALLROOM OF THE BULL, ROCHESTER—Where Jingle danced
with Dr. Slammer's lady-love

And in June, 1913, no less a person than the humble scribe tucked his legs under one of the mahoganies of the coffee-room and stretched them to their full length in the high poster on the second floor back.

As to the hosts of the shadowy and intangible, Dickens himself says that up these very stairs sprinted the volatile Mr. Alfred Jingle on his way to the Assembly Ball, given on the next floor where he danced and made love to Doctor Slammer's buxom widow; that down this same flight roared the doctor, thirsting for Mr. Jingle's blood; and that around this same coffee-room fumed Slammer's belligerent second, loaded with instructions which he was to fire pointblank at Mr. Nathaniel Winkle, or some one representing that bibulous and forgetful gentleman, the moment he came in sight.

Strange to say, in The Bull and its environs few changes have taken place since Mr. Dickens described them, either in its surroundings, its interiors, nor yet in its appointments. The ballroom is quite as the Pickwick party found it, even to the row of chairs and small "elevated den" where the musicians were securely confined. Nothing, certainly, has been done to the scrambling, twisted-about stairs on which Mr. Jingle stood when he asked:

"Devil of a mess on the staircase, waiter — forms going up — carpenters coming down — lamps, glasses, harps ——"

Neither has anything been done to the coffee-room, where Doctor Slammer's belligerent second tried to calm his warlike spirit until the night porter could wake Mr. Winkle, if one can judge from the appearance of its several articles of furniture and adornment; — its table and chairs of old mahogany;

walls lined with odd pictures, old engravings, autographed letters all framed under glass, the side-table set out in silver plate, the mantel capped with a sun-moon-and-stars clock, flanked by glittering side candelabra, their sconces decorated with tinkling glass earrings: — each telling the story of The Bull's earlier days.

So real was it all that before I opened my trap I began to revive my memory of the text by comparing it with what lay before me, particularly the cramped, jammed-together hall with that same twisted staircase leading to the ballroom above, where Jingle, accompanied by Mr. Tupman, hailed the same waiter later on with:

" 'What's going forward?'

" 'Ball, Sir,' said the waiter.

" 'Assembly — eh?'

" 'No, Sir, not Assembly, Sir. Ball for the benefit of a charity, Sir.'

" 'Many fine women in this town, Sir, do you know,' inquired Mr. Tupman with great interest.

" 'Splendid — capital. Kent, Sir — everybody knows Kent — apples, cherries, hops and women. Glass of wine, Sir?'

" 'With great pleasure,' replied Mr. Tupman. The stranger filled and emptied.

" 'I should like very much to go,' replied Mr. Tupman, resuming the subject of the ball. 'Very much.'

" 'Tickets at the bar, Sir,' interposed the waiter. 'Half a guinea each, Sir.' "

As for this ballroom, if anybody, since those hilarious

STAIRCASE OF THE BULL, ROCHESTER—Up which Mr. Winkle staggered the night of the ball, and where Dr. Slammer challenged Jingle

days, has devoted so small a sum as an English sixpence toward its restoration and adornment there is not the slightest evidence of any such wasteful extravagance. The same old chairs are still backed up against the wall — the identical pair in which the widow and Mr. Jingle sat after the dance — the "elevated den" still hangs from the ceiling with its flight of back stairs up which the musicians climbed and from which issued the music that set everybody's feet in motion; the old, battered fireplace; the left-behind portrait decorating the far wall; the high, curtained windows through which the afternoon sun blazed, stencilling patterns of light and dark over the bare floor; the door leading to the small passage through which Doctor Slammer stormed and swore — they are all here!

It was quite easy, therefore, with the rooms spread out before me, to recall the scene which took place on its floor the night when Jingle (who had borrowed Mr. Winkle's coat while that worthy Pickwickian slept) — after eyeing the buxom lady soon to be Slammer's bride, broke out with:

"Lots of money — old girl — pompous doctor — not a bad idea — good fun," and announced to Mr. Tupman's amazement:

"'I'll dance with the widow. . . .'

"'Who is she?' inquired Mr. Tupman.

"'Don't know — never saw her in all my life — cut out the Doctor — here goes.' And Jingle forthwith crossed the room and leaning against the mantelpiece commenced gazing with an air of respectful and melancholy admiration on the fat countenance of the little old lady. Mr. Tupman

looked on in mute astonishment. . . . The widow dropped her fan; the stranger picked it up and presented it. . . . Returned with the Master of the Ceremonies; a little introductory pantomime; and the stranger and Mrs. Badger took their places in the quadrille.

"Doctor Slammer was paralysed. He, Doctor Slammer of the 97th, to be extinguished in a moment by a man whom nobody had ever seen before, and whom nobody knew even now! Doctor Slammer — Doctor Slammer of the 97th rejected! Impossible!"

And the final scene when the stranger, upon returning from his triumph, was accosted by the doctor, who, thirsting for his life, blazed forth with:

"'Sir!' said the Doctor, in an awful voice, producing a card, and retiring into an angle of the passage, 'my name is Slammer, Doctor Slammer, Sir — 97th Regiment — Chatham Barracks — my card, Sir, my card.' He would have added more, but his indignation choked him.

"'Ah!' replied the stranger, coolly. 'Slammer — much obliged — polite attention — not ill now, Slammer — but when I am — knock you up.'

"'You — you're a shuffler, Sir,' gasped the furious Doctor, 'a poltroon — a coward — a liar — a — a — will nothing induce you to give me your card, Sir.'

"'Oh! I see,' said the stranger, half aside, 'negus too strong here — liberal landlord — very foolish — very; lemonade much better — hot rooms — elderly gentlemen — suffer for it in the morning — cruel — cruel'; and he moved on a step or two.

"'You are stopping in this house, Sir,' said the indignant

GAD'S HILL—Where Dickens lived and died

little man; 'you are intoxicated now, Sir; you shall hear from me in the morning, Sir. I shall find you out, Sir; I shall find you out.'

"'Rather you found me out than found me at home,' replied the unmoved stranger."

And then the duel when the irate doctor discovers he had challenged the wrong man.

"'What's all this?' said Doctor Slammer, as his friend and Mr. Snodgrass came running up — 'That's not the man.'

"'Not the man!' said Doctor Slammer's second.

"'Not the man!' said Mr. Snodgrass.

"'Not the man!' said the gentleman with the camp-stool in his hand.

"'Certainly not,' replied the little Doctor. 'That's not the person who insulted me last night.'

"'Very extraordinary!' exclaimed the officer.

"'Very,' said the gentleman with the camp-stool. . . .

"Now Mr. Winkle had opened his eyes. . . . 'I am not the person. I know it.'

"'Then, that,' said the man with the camp-stool, 'is an affront to Doctor Slammer, and a sufficient reason for proceeding immediately.'

"'Pray be quiet, Payne,' said the Doctor's second. 'Why did you not communicate this fact to me, this morning, Sir?'

"'To be sure — to be sure,' said the man with the camp-stool, indignantly.

"'I entreat you to be quiet, Payne,' said the other. 'May I repeat my question, Sir?'

"'Because, Sir,' replied Mr. Winkle, who had had time to deliberate upon his answer — 'because, Sir, you described an intoxicated and ungentlemanly person as wearing a coat, which I have the honour, not only to wear, but to have invented — the proposed uniform, Sir, of the Pickwick Club in London. The honour of that uniform I feel bound to maintain, and I therefore, without inquiry, accepted the challenge which you offered me.'

"'My dear Sir,' said the good-humoured little Doctor, advancing with extended hand, 'I honour your gallantry.'. . .

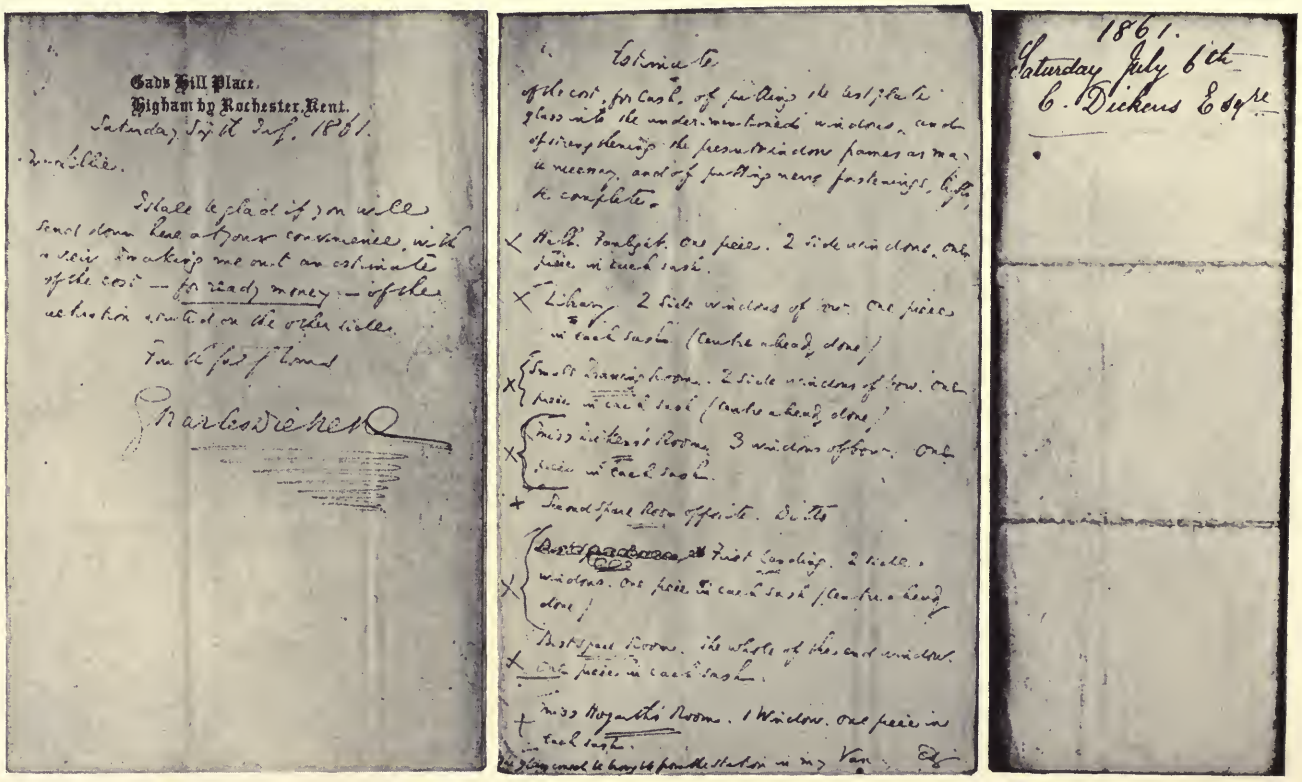
"'I beg you won't mention it, Sir,' said Mr. Winkle.

"'I shall feel proud of your acquaintance, Sir,' said the little Doctor."

At which everybody returned to the Inn where the night was spent in unlimited libations.

My work at The Bull finished, I set out the next afternoon to find The Leather Bottle at Cobham, following the road taken by Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass when they went in search of Mr. Tracy Tupman, who having been deserted by a lovely and fascinating creature — a victim to the artifices of a villain — had retired to this commodious village ale-house, there to rest his heavy load of worldly cares and troubles, and where on my arrival I was ushered into the very room in which Mr. Pickwick had found the heart-broken lover assuaging his grief.

Rather a forlorn, cobwebby kind of a room, I must say, its walls covered with portraits, photographs, personal souvenirs of the novelist, advertisements of his readings, news-



Gads Hill Place.
Higham by Rochester, Kent.
Saturday Sept. 2nd. 1861.

Dear Sir,

I shall be glad if you will send down here at your convenience, with a view to making me out an estimate of the cost — for ready money — of the alterations sketched on the other side.

Yours truly faithfully
Charles Dickens

Estimate

of the cost, for Cash, of putting the best plate glass into the under-mentioned windows, and of strengthening the casement window frames as may be necessary, and of putting new fastenings, &c. &c. complete.

Kitchen, Scullery, &c. One piece. 2 side windows. One piece in each sash.

Library. 2 Side windows of two. One piece in each sash. (Centre wheady done)

Small Drawing Room. 2 Side windows of two. One piece in each sash (Centre already done)

Miss Dickens's Room. 3 windows of two. One piece in each sash.

Second Floor Room opposite. Do. Do.

First Landing. 2 Side windows. One piece in each sash (Centre already done)

Best Front Room. The whole of the end window. One piece in each sash.

Miss Hogarth's Room. 1 Window. One piece in each sash.

1861.
Saturday July 6th
C. Dickens Esqre

LETTER DATED JUNE, 1861—Given to Mr. Sessler by Miss Hogarth. This letter is addressed to a carpenter living near Gad's Hill, asking for an estimate on windows to be repaired at Gad's Hill. [These windows are shown in the author's charcoal sketch.] Now first published

paper clippings descriptive of his death and funeral services, each and every one of them elaborated in a fog-horn voice which broke loose from the top of a tall man who said he was the original landlord — a voice which could have been heard, and doubtless was, a mile away, in Rochester.

After listening to it for half an hour I paid my bill through a hole in a pine board, shutting off the tap-room from the dusty, level-with-the-dirt-road passageway, and walked back to The Bull a wiser and sadder man. One eats an olive to get the taste of a poor wine out of the mouth and thus prepare his palate for better things. I have no grudge against The Leather Bottle. The mug of bass was of the proper quality and temperature and the mug itself was clean. I could have wished that the landlord had had mumps, or quinsy sore throat, or a well-developed case of bronchitis, and I would have been glad had the Coney Island atmosphere permeating the place been allowed to escape out of the open window, taking most of the gimcracks along with it: or perhaps Mr. Tupman's love-affair did not interest me as much as did Mr. Jingle's. One thing is certain, however, the olive of The Bull at Rochester removed the taste of the contents of The Leather Bottle.

That same day I drove to Gad's Hill, some two miles away.

My experiences were not tempestuously pleasant. I went through the same formula used on Doughty Street, which has never failed me the world over when on similar errands, giving the smart-looking young maid who opened the door a condensed account of my blameless life, family history, and present lofty purpose, ending with the presentation of an

immaculate white card, typical of the purity of my motive — none of which, I regret to say, produced the slightest effect.

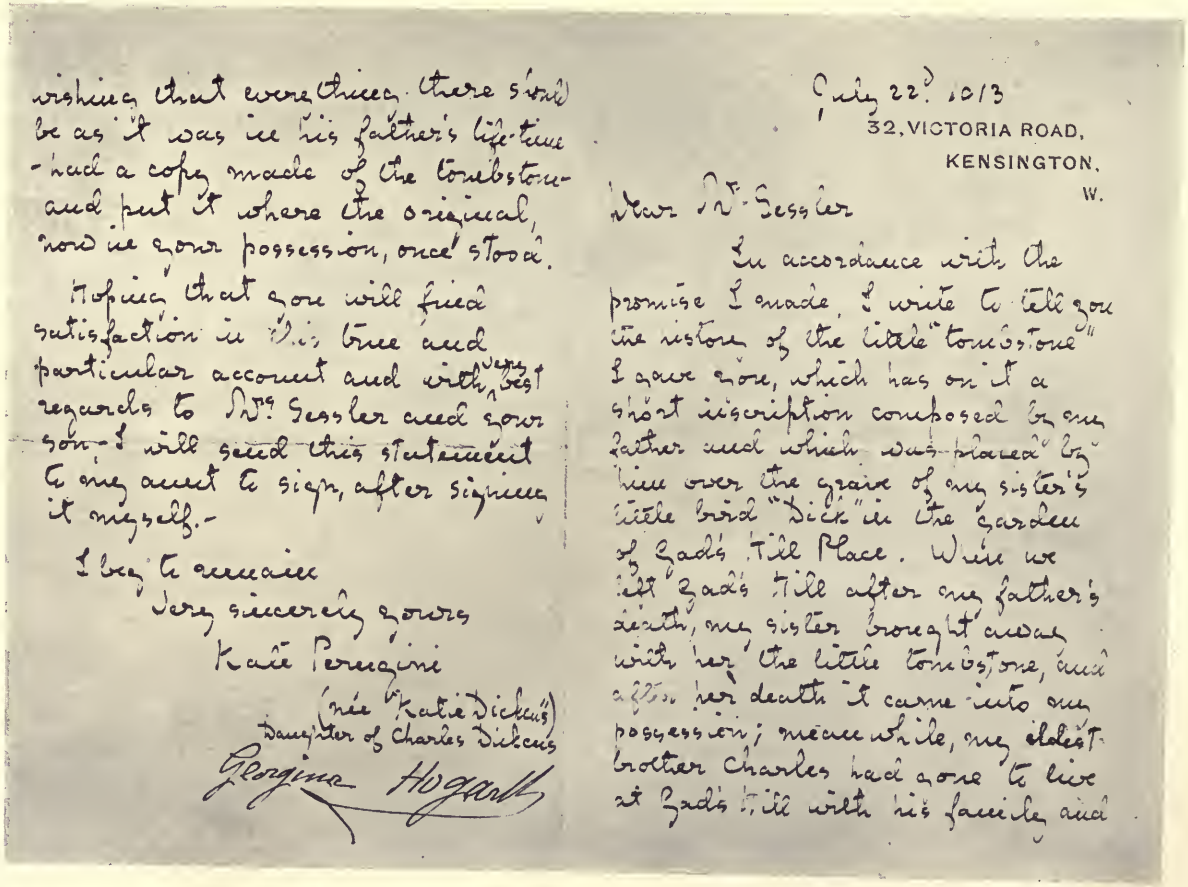
Perhaps it was the slant of my slouch-hat which caused her to hesitate, the card balanced on her palm; perhaps it might have been my smudgy fingers — I had been at work that morning. Or perhaps her hesitation was due to the peculiar cut of my knickerbockers and the accumulated dust on my shoes; but certain it was that only a very decided voice from inside the library door, wanting to know what it was "all about," finally set her feet in motion.

"Wants to see me? What for?"

I remained bareheaded, standing humbly within three feet of where he sat, that peculiar, book-agent feeling trickling down my spine as I listened to the maid's account of my personal appearance; after which I was ushered into the presence of a self-contained, unperturbed Englishman of advanced years, who first looked at me with an expression of "how dare you, sir," modified it to a "well, sirrah," and succeeded at last, when he did open his mouth, in informing me that it was a private house; that the library in which he then sat and in which Mr. Dickens had written was his especial "den," and that on no account — positively on *no* account, and so forth and so forth and so forth.

I urged my youth, my long distance from home, my poverty — how necessary it was for me to make this final sketch in order to feed myself and my family — that I would come at any hour of the day or night — using only one of them, certainly not over one and a half, etc., etc.; but the face did not relax.

ORIGINAL TOMBSTONE IN COPPER—One foot six inches in height, with Dickens's own description of the bird "Dick," buried at Gad's Hill



July 22nd 1913

32, VICTORIA ROAD,
KENSINGTON,
W.

Dear Mr. Sessler

In accordance with the promise I made, I write to tell you the history of the little "tombstone" I gave you, which has on it a short inscription composed by our father and which was placed by him over the grave of my sister's little bird "Dick" in the garden of Gad's Hill Place. When we left Gad's Hill after our father's death, my sister brought it away with her the little tombstone, and after her death it came into our possession; meanwhile, my eldest brother Charles had gone to live at Gad's Hill with his family and

wishing that everything there should be as it was in his father's life-time - had a copy made of the tombstone and put it where the original, now in your possession, once stood.

Hoping that you will find satisfaction in this true and particular account and with best regards to Mrs Sessler and your son - I will send this statement to my aunt to sign, after signing it myself.-

I beg to remain
Very sincerely yours
Katie Perugini
(née "Katie Dickens")
Daughter of Charles Dickens
Georgina Hogarth

LETTER WRITTEN BY MME. PERUGINI (DICKENS'S DAUGHTER)—Addressed to Mr. Sessler, telling the story of the tombstone; how his sister-in-law, Miss Hogarth, took it with her when she left Gad's Hill This letter is also signed by Miss Hogarth. It was given to Mr. Charles Sessler in September, 1913. Now first published

"*Outside*, I have no objections — try the rear view." Then came a wave of his hand toward the maid — a "show-the-man-out" wave.

"I am aware," I began again, standing my ground, "that you must be greatly annoyed with applications of this kind, but that is a penalty we all pay when we are custodians of something that the whole world loves. From my boyhood days I ——"

Out went the hand again — straight out this time — with a set-the-dog-on-him movement.

I understood. I realised my helplessness. Alone and in a foreign land; without friends; twenty miles from my consul; more than twice that distance from our ambassador; aware of the sanctity of an Englishman's home — his castle, and that sort of thing — and so I folded my tent (my slouch-hat) and silently stole away.

And this, my dear reader, is why I am unable to give you, in this modest book, devoted to the genius of Charles Dickens, a view of the interior of his library; of the bow window looking out upon his garden; of his book-shelves and of the very spot where, on the 8th of June, 1870, Miss Hogarth, "seeing with alarm a singular expression of trouble and pain cross his face, caught him in her arms, only to hear the last words he ever spoke as he sank heavily on his left side on the ground." He lay unconscious all that night and died the next day about the same hour.

So, *outside* it was, with the result to be seen in my sketch and with the same summer light bathing the façade smothered in ivy and climbing vines, and almost at the same hour at which he died, for my note-book makes record

that it was in the second week of June, 1913, and in the afternoon of that day that I made this drawing.

And the "outside" was not altogether a wilderness. A coin of the realm, a large, fat silver coin (it is marvellous how many of these a stranger puts in circulation), won over the gardener who brought me an extra chair; two of my best "stogies" (made in Germany) captured a stable-boy who took a message to my cab-driver telling him when to return for me; and one of my best and blandest smiles rewarded the smart young girl who brought out a tea-tray with the necessary accompaniments. As the sun was sinking a very intelligent third, fourth, or fifth man showed me the exact spot upon which stood the kiosk which Fechter gave Mr. Dickens and where he wrote every day and where he was writing up to within a day of his death and which is now in Cobham Park; and he also showed me the grave in which the "best of birds" lies buried — "Dick who passed away at Gad's Hill Place, October 14, 1860."

There is now a wooden tombstone over it, about as large as a shingle — it might have been made of one — and a bed of pansies lend their fragrance. My doubts as to its genuineness, not of the grave but of the gravestone, have been confirmed by a sight of the original of copper, bearing the above inscription, and engraved by Mr. Dickens's own hand. It belongs to my good friend Mr. Sessler, of Philadelphia, as does also the letter describing how it came into his possession, all of which the reader will find duly set forth in these pages.

CHAPTER VI

LONDON BRIDGE, WHERE NOAH CLAYPOLE DOGGED NANCY SIKES'S STEPS THE NIGHT SHE WAS MURDERED

THERE are summer days in England when the air is a benediction, the sunshine a balm, and the delicate greys melting into mists of pearl a joy of the painter; when fleets of wind-filled clouds drift over the blue, their shadows mottling the lush meadows, their topsails mirrored in long stretches of burnished silver — days which are a delight to the eye and a feast to the soul.

And some of this is true of London, not only in its squares, parks, and gardens, gay with trees and flowering shrubs, but along the Great Embankment, where the stone-and-iron monsters wade knee-deep in the Thames, their broad backs freighted with countless multitudes.

It was on one of these June afternoons, and at an hour when the traffic was thickest, that I halted my cab at one end of London Bridge, touched my hat to the officer in charge, and began my story, opening up with some light, desultory talk on a variety of subjects, punctured at the critical moment by the tender of one of my choicest — one with a red-and-gold band — which he thrust between the front buttons of his coat, — cigars being fragile and pockets ungetatable in

a tight-fitting uniform. I then asked permission to anchor my cab and begin work.

He looked at me calmly, took in my canvas, easel, umbrella, and folding stool, and, with a grin that covered his face from his chin to his eyebrows, said crisply:

"Well, why not?"

The cab in place and the trap unstrapped, he helping me to overcome the vagaries of my umbrella, I gave him, as is my habit, not only an account of my present laudable purpose but strove to interest him in the historical and literary data connected with the Bridge, and thus establish a closer relationship should my outdoor studio of a cab become in the near future a bone of contention between the law and the populace.

Beginning with an account of the Bridge itself — I told him how it was the oldest spanning the river, its earliest predecessor being built in the time of the Saxons in 1008; how some eighty years ago, after several structures had seen their day, John Rennee built this Colossus, placing the supporting piers some distance west of the former site, my enthusiasm increasing as I explained in detail some of the problems confronting the distinguished engineer, a bridge being something more to me than a contrivance for crossing a river.

And then, still determined on gaining his confidence (it is extraordinary how polite one is to a London Bobby) and as an immediate excuse for my blocking up the roadway — and there was not the slightest doubt that I *was* blocking it up — I recounted in detail part of Nancy's and Noah Claypole's story as told in "Oliver Twist," pointing out "the

very staircase consisting of three flights," down which the girl had hurried at midnight to meet Mr. Brownlow and Rose Maylie and from which she afterward started back home only to be killed by Bill Sikes. All of which Bobby absorbed with his left ear cupped toward me, his eyes roaming over the hurrying mob, alert and ready for immediate action, his brain intent upon the constantly shifting kaleidoscope before him.

While he was disentangling a push-cart from the hind wheel of a furniture van, I made an inventory of the several parts of the Bridge itself, comparing them with the description given in "Oliver Twist," especially the left-hand stairs where the meeting took place, and which are the same to-day as in Nancy's time. "Part of the bridge; consisting of three flights. Just below the end of the second, going down, the stone wall on the left terminates in an ornamental pilaster facing towards the Thames. At this point the lower steps widen: so that a person turning that angle of the wall is necessarily unseen by any others on the stairs who chance to be above him, if only a step."

Nor was it difficult with the stage-setting before me to recall the scene itself.

"The church clocks chimed three-quarters past eleven," runs the chronicle, "as two figures emerged on London Bridge. One, which advanced with a swift and rapid step, was that of a woman, who looked eagerly about her as though in quest of some expected object; the other figure was that of a man, who slunk along in the deepest shadow he could find, and, at some distance, accommodated his pace to hers: stopping when she stopped: and, as she moved again, creep-

ing stealthily on: but never allowing himself, in the ardour of his pursuit, to gain upon her footsteps. Thus, they crossed the bridge, from the Middlesex to the Surrey shore: when the woman, apparently disappointed in her anxious scrutiny of the foot-passengers, turned back. The movement was sudden; but he who watched her was not thrown off his guard by it; for, shrinking into one of the recesses which surmount the piers of the bridge, and leaning over the parapet the better to conceal his figure, he suffered her to pass by, on the opposite pavement. When she was about the same distance in advance as she had been before, he slipped quietly down, and followed her again. At nearly the centre of the bridge, she stopped. The man stopped too."

Then follows the interview and Nancy's story; one so fateful in its consequences to her.

"After a time she arose," continues the text, "and with feeble and tottering steps ascended to the street. The astonished listener remained motionless on his post for some minutes afterwards, and having ascertained, with many cautious glances round him, that he was again alone, crept slowly from his hiding place, and returned, stealthily and in the shade of the wall, in the same manner as he had descended.

"Peeping out, more than once, when he reached the top, to make sure that he was unobserved, Noah Claypole darted away at his utmost speed, and made for the Jew's house as fast as his legs would carry him."

I worked on until quite late, pausing now and then to study the glide and thrust of the great city weaving pat-

LONDON BRIDGE—Over which Nancy crossed, followed by Noah Claypole

terns of joy and suffering into the carpet of the broad highway. And when the shadows began to fall and the night to settle, and as in Nancy's time, "a mist hung over the river, deepening the red glare of the fires that burnt upon the small craft moored off the different wharves, and rendering darker and more indistinct the murky buildings on the banks," and "the old smoke-stained store houses on either side, rose heavy and dull from the dense mass of roofs and gables, and frowned sternly upon water too black to reflect even their lumbering shapes," I folded my trap and again sought Bobby.

He was leaning against the parapet, watching the traffic. Now and then he would nod to some one he knew, or wave his hand as a warning to an impetuous driver, his glance sweeping the broad road thronged with hurrying thousands.

As he caught sight of me, his face lighted up and he made a quick step in my direction.

"Rough part of London, isn't it?" I began.

"Yes — 'long down by the river; not here."

"Of course you've been on the force some time?" I continued.

"Oh, yes, about twenty years."

The talk now drifted into his daily duties — the hours he was on post — how and where his orders were received; and so, following the bent of my mind, I told him — this time in detail — knowing that in London life reflects every shade of crime; knowing, too, that no one understands its intricacies better than the police — the whole story of Fagin and Bill Sykes — the traffic having slackened somewhat and sustained conversation being the easier.

That the story was impressing him very strongly I soon

saw from his manner, and when I had finished he turned to me, paused for an instant as if thinking out the details, and in a thoughtful tone said:

"I had something happen to me might interest you, and if you'll stay here a minute until I straighten out that cove who's trying to crowd his cart in between that wagon and the footway I'll tell you about it. Oh — it's all right; he's moved on. I had a woman case once which came pretty near being rather savage on me. There wasn't any murder to it like your friend Nancy, but it might have been. I was over round the church — in the Borough — you can see the tower if you twist your head. There's a kind of small park over there, close to the town hall, Southwark, where the women take their children in the afternoon and on hot nights. One night I came up against a woman sitting on a bench; she had a baby in her arms, and, as it was after hours, I told her she'd better take it home — quite polite-like — when she began to curse, and I saw right away she was staggering drunk. I got fast hold of her then and put her up on her feet, and she started to strike back, and it was all I could do to get her in — with the baby in one arm — I had to carry the kiddie — she doing all she could to break away from my other hand.

"His Worship listened to her story and she showed her arm, which was some red, but I couldn't help it for fear I'd drop the baby. His Worship said, 'I shall have to hold you, officer, for cruelty' — that, you see, would have been dismissal for me, abusing a woman with a child in her arms — and then he says to the woman: 'You can go.'

"'May I speak, Your Worship?' I says. 'What I want

is a re-mand. If I ain't mistaken this woman is an old offender.'

"'Granted,' says his Worship. And I got to work and found out she had been up four times in two months, and his Worship made it a fine of three pound ten.

"Her husband was an upholsterer, a very fair kind of a chap, doing a pretty good business. He'd saved up four pounds to take his wife and child to Brighton — she was all right when she wasn't drunk — and so he ups and was about to pay the fine and take her home, when I put in a word with his Worship and he knocked it down to one pound ten.

"Well, he was always very civil to me after that when I'd meet him coming and going; then I got to dropping in when off duty at his house, and you never saw a nicer or soberer woman than she was for about six months.

"One night I was just leaving his house and I went into the kitchen to wash my hands and was just asking her where I'd get a towel — she had her back to me — when she gave a little start and down went a black bottle and the whisky all over the floor. Her husband came running in, hearing the noise, and he saw right away what it was, and if he hadn't he could have smelt it, and up-stairs he went like he was crazy, grabbed a pistol from the bureau drawer, and made straight for her with his finger on the trigger. I got there just in time, and the ball went into the ceiling and she on the floor in a stiff faint. Then I had all I could do to get it out of his hand or he would have shot himself. Now, when I meet him he doesn't look me in the eye. He holds his head down and gets fast of my hand and gives it a slow grip."

"And what became of him?" I asked.

"Oh, the wife pulled out after that. They're both all right. The baby's a fine lad. About four years old now. He told one of my pals I'd saved his life, although he never said so to me."

CHAPTER VII

ST. MARTIN'S-IN-THE-FIELDS AND ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, WESTMINSTER, WHERE DAVID COPPERFIELD FOUND PEGGOTTY, AND WHERE THE TWO MET MARTHA IN THEIR SEARCH FOR LITTLE EM'LY

THE story of Little Em'ly, Peggotty, and Ham is one of the Magdalen stories that the world will never tire of hearing.

Dickens was never more moving than when he wrote of Little Em'ly's trust, patience, and repentance; of Peggotty's loyal devotion; of Ham's almost reverential tenderness for his erring sweetheart, and of Martha's struggle to keep her pledge. Few of his readers have ever been able to keep back the tears over these special pages of "David Copperfield." I myself have long since given it up as a hopeless task.

And when one finishes the book it would be just as well to open that other and find the words of the Master, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more," for these two gospels have done as much to expose the hypocrisy, cruelty, and stupidity of the "Holier than Thous" as anything written since the early days of the Christian era.

In following the golden threads woven into the warp and

woof of this tragedy one or more of their ends can be found hidden in the two churches whose titles head this chapter. And as the buildings are still in existence, and almost as Mr. Dickens used them in his never-to-be-forgotten masterpiece, it is eminently fitting that they should find their place in these chronicles.

The few changes apparent do not affect in any way our interest in the story nor do they rob the text of its truth. A slant has been given to the street on which the old church stands, and St. Martin's Lane has been widened and straightened until it can dip the more gracefully into Trafalgar Square and so on to the Strand; but the sombre, dignified pillars of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, their shoulders supporting the cornice and roof, the whole a mass of mellow soot soft as velvet, and the low marble steps leading to the portico are precisely as they were on that eventful night when David Copperfield, taking his way home by St. Martin's Lane, came across Martha and then Peggotty.

"It had been a bitter day," he says, "and a cutting north east wind had blown for some time. The wind had gone down with the light, and so the snow had come on. It was a heavy, settled fall, I recollect, in great flakes; and it lay thick. The noise of wheels and tread of people were as hushed as if the streets had been strewn that depth with feathers.

"My shortest way home, — and I naturally took the shortest way on such a night — was through St. Martin's Lane. Now, the church which gives its name to the lane, stood in a less free situation at that time; there being no open space before it, and the lane winding down to the Strand.

ST. MARTIN'S-IN-THE-FIELDS—It was on these steps that David Copperfield found Peggotty in his search for Emily

As I passed the steps of the portico, I encountered, at the corner a woman's face. It looked in mine, passed across the narrow lane, and disappeared. I knew it. I had seen it somewhere. But I could not remember where. I had some association with it, that struck upon my heart directly; but I was thinking of anything else when it came upon me, and was confused.

"On the steps of the church, there was the stooping figure of a man, who had put down some burden on the smooth snow, to adjust it; my seeing the face, and my seeing him, were simultaneous. I don't think I had stopped in my surprise; but, in any case, as I went on, he rose, turned, and came down towards me. I stood face to face with Mr. Peggotty!

"Then I remembered the woman. It was Martha, to whom Emily had given the money that night in the kitchen. Martha Endell — side by side with whom, he would not have seen his dear niece, Ham had told me, for all the treasures wrecked in the sea.

"We shook hands heartily. At first, neither of us could speak a word.

"'Mas'r Davy!' he said, gripping me tight, 'it do my 'art good to see you, Sir. Well met, well met!' " . . .

Weeks elapse since this meeting between Peggotty and Mas'r David, and another takes place at which David suggests that Martha, still a woman of the streets, may help in the finding of Emily.

"'Do you know that she (Martha) is in London?' (Copperfield asked).

"'I have seen her in the streets,' he (Peggotty) answered with a shiver.

"'But you don't know,' said I, 'that Emily was charitable to her, with Ham's help, long before she fled from home. Nor, that, when we met one night, and spoke together in the room yonder, over the way, she listened at the door.'

"'Mas'r Davy?' he replied in astonishment. 'That night when it snew so hard?'

" 'That night. I have never seen her since. I went back, after parting from you, to speak to her, but she was gone. I was unwilling to mention her to you then, and I am now; but she is the person of whom I speak, and with whom I think we should communicate. Do you understand?'

"'Too well, Sir,' he replied. We had sunk our voices, almost to a whisper, and continued to speak in that tone.

"'You say you have seen her. Do you think that you could find her? I could only hope to do so by chance.'

"'I think, Mas'r David, I know wheer to look.'

"'It is dark. Being together, shall we go out now, and try to find her to-night?' "

"He assented, and prepared to accompany me. . . .

"We had come, through Temple Bar, into the City. Conversing no more now, and walking at my side, he yielded himself up to the one aim of his devoted life, and went on, with that hushed concentration of his faculties which would have made his figure solitary in a multitude. We were not far from Blackfriars Bridge, when he turned his head and

pointed to a solitary female figure flitting along the opposite side of the street. I knew it, readily, to be the figure that we sought.

"We crossed the road, and were pressing on towards her, when it occurred to me that she might be more disposed to feel a woman's interest in the lost girl, if we spoke to her in a quieter place, aloof from the crowd, and where we should be less observed. I advised my companion, therefore, that we should not address her yet, but follow her; . . . At length she turned into a dull, dark street, where the noise and crowd are lost; and I said, 'We may speak to her now;' and, mending our pace, we went after her.

"We were now down in Westminster. We had turned back to follow her, having encountered her coming towards us; and Westminster Abbey was the point at which she passed from the lights and noise of the leading streets. She proceeded so quickly, when she got free of the two currents of passengers setting towards and from the bridge, that, between this and the advance she had of us when she struck off, we were in the narrow water-side street by Millbank before we came up with her. At that moment she crossed the road, as if to avoid the footsteps that she heard so close behind; . . .

"I then signed to Mr. Peggotty to remain where he was, and emerged . . . to speak to her. I think she was talking to herself. I am sure, although absorbed in gazing at the water, that her shawl was off her shoulders, and that she was muffling her hands in it, in an unsettled and bewildered way, more like the action of a sleep-walker than a waking person. . . . I know, and never can forget, that there was that in her wild manner which gave me no assurance but

that she would sink before my eyes, until I had her arm within my grasp.

"At the same moment I said 'Martha!'

"She uttered a terrified scream, and struggled with me with such strength that I doubt if I could have held her alone. But a stronger hand than mine was laid upon her; and when she raised her frightened eyes and saw whose it was, she made but one more effort and dropped down between us. We carried her away from the water to where there were some dry stones, and there laid her down, crying and moaning. In a little while she sat among the stones, holding her wretched head with both her hands.

"'Oh, the river!' she cried passionately. 'Oh, the river!'"

All this took place within sight of my sketch beyond Westminster, "and Parliament House is Millbank where is Church Street" (now Dean Stanley Street) "running from the river to St. John's Church, Westminster; that atrociously ill-mannered church of Queen Anne's days, built, it is said, on the line of a footstool overturned in one of that lady's fits of petulant wrath," writes Miltoun.

And then there follows the long search for Emily, Martha promising to help, and last that marvellous scene on the top floor of the house where Emily had found temporary refuge for the night and where, to quote Peggotty, she "stood upon the brink more than I can say or think on," and where Martha "trew to her promise, saved her," answered by that cry of joy from Copperfield when he heard the story of Martha's rescue of Emily drop from Peggotty's lips.

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, WESTMINSTER—Down this street—then Church Street (now Dean Stanley Street)—ran Martha followed by Peggotty and Copperfield

"'Mas'r Davy!' he said, gripping my hand in that strong hand of his. 'It was you as first made mention of her to me. I thank'ee, Sir! She was arnest. She had know'd of her bitter knowledge wheer to watch and what to do. . . . Them belonging to the house would have stopped her, but they might as soon have stopped the sea. "Stand away from me," she says, "I am a ghost that calls her from beside her open grave!" She told Em'ly she had seen me, and know'd I loved her, and forgive her. She wrapped her, hasty, in her clothes. . . . she attended to my Em'ly, lying wearied out, and wandering betwixt whiles, till late next day. Then she went in search of me; then in search of you, Mas'r Davy. . . .

"'All night long,' continued Mr. Peggotty, 'we have been together, Em'ly and me. 'Tis little (considering the time) as she has said, in wureds, through them broken-hearted tears; 'tis less as I have seen of her dear face, as grow'd into a woman's at my hearth. But, all night long, her arms has been about my neck; and her head has laid heer; and we knows full well, as we can put our trust in one another, ever more.'" . . .

The whole story was in my mind as I worked perched in my cab, the holiday throngs surging about its wheels. And with it there came a strange sense of exhilaration; and later on when I read the afternoon papers a stranger shock.

It happened to be Alexandra day, and London was in gala attire. From far-away Kensington to the Tower Bridge; on every corner in almost every important doorway; at the entrances of countless theatres, shops, and cafés; along the

streets; in the parks, art galleries, and restaurants stood women dressed in their best, from the humblest shop-girl in her straw hat and white muslin frock to the duchess in laces and silk.

They were selling flowers to whoever would buy in aid of the sick in London's many hospitals. Pressing close, some with a penny, some with a five-pound note, surged the outpourings of the great city; men and women from the slums lying between the Strand and the river; costermongers, push-cart men, peddlers, clerks, teamsters, hucksters; men from the banks, from insurance offices; presidents of trust companies, tourists, strangers; — every class and condition of man and woman; — and from my perch I could study them all — all reverent; all conscious of the dignity, mercy, and tenderness of the women standing before them doing a menial service for a noble cause; all deeply appreciative of the sacrifice, the men of the street jerking at their cap brims, the men of the clubs lifting their hats — a wonderful, illuminating, and always-to-be-remembered object-lesson.

And then came the shock and with it the other lesson. At that same hour of the afternoon — within half a dozen blocks of where I sat — a band of assorted women carrying the banner of their cause, in an attempt to harangue a crowd, were set upon by the mob and barely rescued by the police, their clothes almost torn from their backs.

The two incidents afford food for thought; they also point a moral. But — and here I restrain myself — they cannot very well adorn a tale. Neither Emily's nor this one of my own, which must concern itself wholly with the genius of a great writer.

CHAPTER VIII

COVENT GARDEN MARKET, ONE OF THE HAUNTS OF TOM PINCH AND HIS SISTER RUTH; LITTLE DORRIT; MISS WREN, AND THE "BAD CHILD," AS DESCRIBED IN "OUR MUTUAL FRIEND"

ONE must be up bright and early to enjoy Covent Garden Market.

At five o'clock, the open space surrounding the stalls fronting St. Paul's is almost impassable, so thickly massed are the carts and wagons. At eight o'clock one can get through with a little patience and the assistance of the police; at ten o'clock you can drive along at a trot; at noon the wide highway is swept clean, with here and there a van backed up to the sidewalk reloading the unsold truck.

I had, the year before, in seeking shelter from a driving rain, opened my stool and set up my easel under the portico of St. Paul's Church and from this coign of vantage had caught the vista ending in the Sporting Club known in Mr. Thackeray's time as Evan's Chop House, in which he read the last chapter of "The Newcomes" to Mr. Lowell and cried over the colonel's death.

To-day, a June sun making it possible for me to get a wider range, I had with the permission of a gold-laced and

bebuttoned porter (2 shillings and 6) placed my stool on the top step of the club's entrance, my back braced this time against a panel framing the door.

I could now see over the heads of the crowd which was rapidly thinning out — too rapidly, for the carts in my foreground were disappearing one after another, uncovering a space far too open for effective composition in black and white. So I hired a grocer's wagon to stand still, one with supplies for the club. I began negotiations by suggesting that it was about feeding time for man and beast; that my sketch would finish in half an hour; that the Bobby (I had, as usual, made friends with the authorities before I started to work) would take care that no one raided his stock; and wound up by stating that I had the price of a beer, with the necessary additions — either a chop or a dish of tripe at his good pleasure — somewhere about my clothes, if I could find it — *and I could.* All of which worked like a charm, no one of us being better pleased than the rickety, knock-kneed, spiral-spring-fed beast rooting for the last grain of oats hidden away in the bottom of his nose-bag.

With a strong dark now against my strongest light, I could indicate space and aerial perspective. I could also bring into their proper plane the rows of stalls fringing the market buildings — from which Tom Pinch and his sister Ruth bought their vegetables when the two went to housekeeping.

"In most of these morning excursions Ruth accompanied him. As their landlord was always up and away at his business (whatever that might be, no one seemed to know) at a very early hour, the habits of the people of the house

COVENT GARDEN MARKET—Where Tom Pinch and his sister Ruth bought their vegetables

in which they lodged corresponded with their own. Thus, they had often finished their breakfast, and were out in the summer-air, by seven o'clock. After a two hours' stroll they parted at some convenient point: Tom going to the Temple, and his sister returning home, as methodically as you please.

"Many and many a pleasant stroll they had in Covent Garden Market: snuffing up the perfume of the fruits and flowers, wondering at the magnificence of the pine-apples and melons; catching glimpses down side avenues, of rows and rows of old women, seated on inverted baskets shelling peas; looking unutterable things at the fat bundles of asparagus with which the dainty shops were fortified as with a breastwork; and, at the herbalists' doors, gratefully inhaling scents as of veal-stuffing yet uncooked, dreamily mixed up with capsicums, brown-paper, seeds: even with hints of lusty snails and fine young curly leeches. Many and many a pleasant stroll they had among the poultry markets, where ducks and fowls, with necks unnaturally long, lay stretched out in pairs, ready for cooking; where there were speckled eggs in mossy baskets; white country sausages beyond impeachment by surviving cat or dog, or horse or donkey; new cheeses to any wild extent; live birds in coops and cages, looking much too big to be natural, in consequence of those receptacles being much too little; rabbits, alive and dead, innumerable. Many a pleasant stroll they had among the cool, refreshing, silvery fish-stalls, with a kind of moonlight effect about their stock in trade, excepting always for the ruddy lobsters. Many a pleasant stroll among the waggon-loads of fragrant hay, beneath which

dogs and tired waggoners lay fast asleep, oblivious of the pieman and the public house."

Quite another side of Covent Garden Market is given in "Our Mutual Friend," written some twenty years later. The market may have lost its pristine freshness since the days of Ruth and Tom's economics, or Mr. Dickens might have come upon it at dawn after one of his nightly prowls and have utilised the more forbidding impressions thus gained, in this later work:

"'Where are you going to seek your fortune?' asked Miss Wren.

"The old man smiled, but looked about him with a look of having lost his way in life, which did not escape the dolls' dressmaker.

"'Verily, Jenny,' said he, 'the question is to the purpose, and more easily asked than answered. But as I have experience of the ready good will and good help of those who have given occupation to Lizzie, I think I will seek them out for myself.'

"'On foot?' asked Miss Wren, with a chop.

"'Ay!' said the old man. 'Have I not my staff?'

"It was exactly because he had his staff, and presented so quaint an aspect, that she mistrusted his making the journey.

"'The best thing you can do,' said Jenny, 'for the time being, at all events, is to come home with me, godmother. Nobody's there but my bad child, and Lizzie's lodging stands empty.' . . .

"Now the bad child having been strictly charged by his parent to remain at home in her absence, of course went

out; and, being in the very last stage of mental decrepitude, . . . the degraded creature staggered into Covent Garden Market and there bivouacked, to have an attack of the trembles succeeded by an attack of the horrors, in a doorway.

"This Market of Covent Garden was quite out of the creature's line of road, but it had the attraction for him which it has for the worst of the solitary members of the drunken tribe. It may be the companionship of the nightly stir, or it may be the companionship of the gin and beer that slop about among carters and hucksters, or it may be the companionship of the trodden vegetable refuse, which is so like their own dress that perhaps they take the Market for a great wardrobe; but be it what it may, you shall see no such individual drunkards on doorsteps anywhere, as there. Of dozing women-drunkards especially, you shall come upon such specimens there, in the morning sunlight, as you might seek out of doors in vain through London. Such stale vapid rejected cabbage-leaf and cabbage-stalk dress, such damaged-orange countenance, such squashed pulp of humanity, are open to the day nowhere else. So the attraction of the Market drew Mr. Dolls to it, and he had out his two fits of trembles and horrors in a doorway on which a woman had had out her sodden nap a few hours before."

Still another phase of Covent Garden is given in "Little Dorrit" — a childish vision:

"Courtly ideas of Covent Garden, as a place with famous coffee-houses, where gentlemen wearing gold-laced coats and swords had quarrelled and fought duels; costly ideas

of Covent Garden as a place where there were flowers in winter at guineas a-piece, pine-apples at guineas a pound, and peas at guineas a pint; picturesque ideas of Covent Garden, as a place where there was a mighty theatre, showing wonderful and beautiful sights to richly-dressed ladies and gentlemen, and which was for ever far beyond the reach of poor Fanny or poor uncle." . . .

The pineapples made a lasting impression on Dickens, for he says, in "Forster":

"When I had no money (for a meal) I took a turn in Covent Garden and stared at the pineapples."

And again in "The Uncommercial Traveller":

"Figuratively speaking, I travel for the house of Human Interest Brothers, and have rather a large connection in the fancy goods way. Literally speaking, I am always wandering here and there from my rooms in Covent Garden, London — now about the city streets, now about the country by-roads — seeing many little things, and some great things, which, because they interest me, I think may interest others."

Within a stone-throw of where I sat was the Tavistock Coffee Room, where the "Finches of the Grove" — a club of high rollers described in "Great Expectations," met, the end and aim of the institution being "that the members should dine expensively once a fortnight to quarrel among themselves as much as possible after dinner, and to cause six waiters to get drunk on the stairs."

I myself could not dine expensively — not unless it should be once a fortnight — nor had I any intention of

leading any waiter astray, but I, too, had reached my "feeding time," and so, the sketch being finished, I thanked Bobby for his courtesy, added another coin of the realm to the grocer's hoard, restrapped my easel, and made my way to the "Tavistock," where I was regaled with a mug and a chop, and under the same roof and perhaps on the very seat once occupied by Sir Peter Lely, Kneller, and Thornhill, in the days when:

"Priests sipped coffee and sparks and poets tea."

CHAPTER IX

THE FOUNTAIN IN FOUNTAIN COURT, WHERE RUTH PINCH MET HER LOVER, JOHN WESTLOCK

I KNEW the Temple fairly well and its several Courts, having studied them the year before in my search for Mr. Thackeray's haunts and those of his characters: Lamb Court, in which Pendennis and Warrington had their chambers; the façade of the building covered with vines and flowering creepers; Hare Court, where Mr. Thackeray began the study of law under Mr. Taprell — the room is on the first floor and the house is as old and mouldy as it was in his days; Brick Court, where Goldsmith lived and died and where Mr. Thackeray once had lodgings; Pump Court, where he located the "Hon. Algernon Percy Deuceace," the prototype of the card-sharper who robbed him of his patrimony and sent him out into the world to earn his bread — the luckiest thing that ever happened to the great novelist and the luckiest thing that ever happened to the reading world — all these I knew; but, somehow, although I had peeped in and wondered at the beauty of its surroundings, I had never seen the fountain at Fountain Court.

Tom Pinch's office had been pointed out to me, where the lovable fellow worked all day sorting and bringing into

shape the chaotic mass that old Chuzzlewit had put him in charge of, and I had followed him in my mind out of the Court and across the narrow road which leads to Fleet Street and so on past Brick Court corner (Goldsmith's house) until I had lost him in the dense foliage. But I never pursued him any further, being more occupied that year with Mr. Thackeray than with Mr. Dickens.

"There was a little plot between Tom Pinch and his sister," says the latter, "that Tom should always come out of the Temple by one way; and that was, past the fountain coming through Fountain Court, he was just to glance down the steps leading into Garden Court, and to look once all round him, and if Ruth had come to meet him, then he would see her . . . coming briskly up, with the best little laugh upon her face that ever played in opposition to the fountain, and beat it all to nothing."

No Bobby, on this June day, helped me in my search to find the fountain in Fountain Court. The law of the metropolis and the tramp of its guardians stop just outside the arched gate giving on Fleet Street, and A Person in Serviceable Livery looks after you the moment you put foot within the confines of the Temple. Nor are half-crowns of the slightest use; even cigars go a-begging; and friendly conversation, when attempted, ends in a "move-on" gesture. Certain high officials must be *approached and with due form;* you must have references — good ones, accompanied by a certificate that you are of a sane mind — neither a lunatic, a vagrant, a beggar, or a painter: the latter being especially undesirable by reason of an ungovernable desire to open ham sandwiches and white umbrellas.

Fortunately, my blameless life — how often has it saved me! — brought me the necessary permit, — and the Emblazoned Flunkey was satisfied and I unlimbered my trap on the edge of the great stone curb framing the basin in which were mirrored the overbending sky and gently waving trees. The E. F., now that the regulations had been conformed to, was then gracious enough to extend the non-gushing interim of the geyser's activity until 2 P. M., the water being always turned on again at 1 P. M. (two shillings and six again), but then, of course, everything in the season comes high in London — including fountains.

This done, he took himself off and left me alone to revive the memories of my youth — more especially the two love stories of Mr. Dickens which ring as true to me to-day as they did in the days of my boyhood: — The love of Dot Peerybingle for her husband John, the carman, in that exquisite prose poem, "The Cricket on the Hearth," which comes back to me in the tones of my father's voice, who read it with consummate skill and feeling; and the romance of Ruth Pinch and John Westlock.

Dickens had all London in which to set the scene of Ruth's wooing. There were benches tucked away under sheltering trees in many a park and garden; there were Vaux Hall, Richmond, Greenwich; unfrequented paths leading to the river; John Westlock's chambers in Furnival's Inn when Tom had stepped out for a moment: but none of these would do; there must be the warmth of the sunshine, the joy of laughing water, the caress of tender branches, long vistas of bending foliage, and an infinite perspective of still greater beauty beyond. So he chose a garden in the Temple

THE FOUNTAIN IN FOUNTAIN COURT, THE TEMPLE—
Where Ruth Pinch met her lover

and in choosing laid the scenes around the fountain of Fountain Court.

The description written in 1843 will answer to-day as foot-lines to my sketch:

"Brilliantly the Temple Fountain sparkled in the sun, and laughingly its liquid music played, and merrily the idle drops of water danced and danced, and peeping out in sport among the trees, plunged lightly down to hide themselves, as little Ruth and her companion came towards it."

And the love-scene is worthy of the setting.

"And why they came towards the Fountain at all is a mystery; for they had no business there. It was not in their way. It was quite out of their way. They had no more to do with the Fountain, bless you, than they had with — with Love, or any out of the way thing of that sort.

"It was all very well for Tom and his sister to make appointments by the Fountain, but that was quite another affair. . . .

"However, there they found themselves. And another extraordinary part of the matter was, that they seemed to have come there, by a silent understanding. Yet when they got there, they were a little confused by being there, which was the strangest part of all; because there is nothing naturally confusing in a Fountain. We all know that.

"'What a good old place it was!' John said. With quite an earnest affection for it.

"'A pleasant place, indeed,' said little Ruth. 'So shady!'

"Oh wicked little Ruth!

"They came to a stop when John began to praise it. The

day was exquisite; and stopping at all, it was quite natural — nothing could be more so — that they should glance down Garden Court; because Garden Court ends in the Garden, and the Garden ends in the River, and that glimpse is very bright and fresh and shining on a summer's day. Then, oh little Ruth, why not look boldly at it! Why fit that tiny, precious, blessed little foot into the cracked corner of an insensible old flagstone in the pavement; and be so very anxious to adjust it to a nicety!"

And so the story goes on; the two walking side by side in search of Tom, until: "They had reached their destination. She never could have gone any further. It would have been impossible to walk in such a tremble.

"Tom had not come in. They entered the triangular parlour together, and alone. . . .

"She sat down on the little sofa, and untied her bonnet-strings. He sat down by her side, and very near her: very, very near her. Oh, rapid, swelling, bursting little heart, you knew that it would come to this, and hoped it would. Why beat so wildly, heart!

"'Dear Ruth! Sweet Ruth! If I had loved you less, I could have told you that I loved you, long ago. I have loved you from the first. There never was a creature in the world more truly loved than you, dear Ruth, by me!'

"She clasped her little hands before her face. The gushing tears of joy, and pride, and hope, and innocent affection, would not be restrained. Fresh from her full young heart they came to answer him.

"'My dear love! If this is: I almost dare to hope it is, now: not painful or distressing to you, you make me hap-

pier than I can tell you, or you imagine. Darling Ruth!' . . . The soft, light touch fell coyly, but quite naturally, upon the lover's shoulder; the delicate waist, the drooping head, the blushing cheek, the beautiful eyes, the exquisite little mouth itself, were all as natural as possible."

CHAPTER X

JOHN FORSTER'S HOUSE AT NO. 58 LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS

HERE it was that Mr. Dickens for the first time read "The Chimes," — and in that very room behind the window-panes seen in my sketch; — and behind the same panes, no doubt, if one can judge from the purple tones in the wavy glass which only great age can give. Here Mr. Tulkinghorn defied the Frenchwoman; here he plotted against Lady Dedlock, and here he was found one morning "lying face down on the floor, shot through the heart." And here, to-day, true to its traditions it is still a mansion "let off in sets of chambers," where, to quote the author of "Bleak House," "lawyers lie like maggots in nuts."

And many of the near-by dwellings famous in the old days still remain intact, their only signs of decrepitude being those that the years of mould and smoke produce. Newcastle House, the residence of the great Duke of Newcastle, built by Inigo Jones in 1686, still stands erect in its impressive aloofness; Lindsay House, the home of the Earl of Lindsay, that dates from 1668, shows almost the same façade given in an old print. Many others, too, on the west and south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields still retain all their old-time dignity.

The Square itself, once a wide-open common where in 1683 Lord Russell was executed for a crime he did not commit, has boasted a fence since 1735, and to-day is one of

the largest and best-shaded squares in London, due, no doubt, to the fines and penalties heaped upon the heads of the offender who violated the rules governing its seclusion, as is proved by a proclamation dated 1805, a facsimile of which is herewith reproduced. The original was the property of an old fellow, the proprietor of a near-by public house, a friend of my cabby who, while I was at work, regaled both the cabby and the horse within its bar and stable.

I can understand now, with the document before me, why other sections of the Temple — like Fountain Court — still preserve their rest and solitude. What would have happened had I defied all the rules and attempted to work around the Fountain without a permit, it is impossible to imagine. But all doubts would have been solved had I tried it in Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1805.

And a great Square it was in its day — this famous West End of London, and a great people lived and played their parts within its confines. Nell Gwynne entranced her audiences at the Duke's Theatre, Portugal Row; Betterton acted in "Hamlet" (this in 1662), bringing fame and fortune to the company; Opie (1791) painted portraits in one of the great houses on the south side not far from the theatre, the carriages of his patrons, so great was his popularity, blocking up the street; Congreve's "Love for Love" (1695) was played for the first time with Mrs. Bracegirdle as Angelica, and thirty years later, "The Beggar's Opera," with Lavinia Fenton so bewitching as Polly Peacham that she carried by storm the heart of the Duke of Bolton and became his Duchess; an outcome, the scribe remarks, by no means unusual in our day. And in this same theatre Pepys was so

vastly amused that he went as often as he could in order to make Mrs. Pepys "as mad as the devil," an occupation which, if we may believe his chronicle, filled the larger part of his waking hours.

But it is with the year 1844, when "The Chimes" first saw the light, and ten years later, when "Bleak House" was published, that I have now to do.

Forster tells of his receiving a letter from Mr. Dickens, who was then on the Continent, announcing his near arrival in London. Accordingly a group of his friends, awaited him at No. 58 Lincoln's Inn Fields, there to listen to Mr. Dickens's promised reading of his new Christmas story, Maclise making a delightful drawing of the gathering, as can be seen by any one who hunts up the original in the Forster Collection.

"Dickens's letter to Forster was written from Geneva, in November, 1844:

". . . But the party for the night following? I know you have consented to the party. Let me see. Don't have any one, this particular night, for dinner, but let it be a summons for the special purpose at half-past six. Carlyle, indispensable, and I should like his wife of all things: *her* judgment would be invaluable. You will ask Mac, and why not his sister? Stanny and Jerrold I should particularly wish; Edwin Landseer; Blanchard; . . . and when I meet you, oh! Heaven, what a week we will have!"

Forster further describes the occasion itself as being:

"Rather memorable . . . the germ of those readings to

NOTICE is hereby given, that, by a poſitive Act of Parliament, the following Penalties are inflicted upon Perſons guilty of the following Offences in *Lincoln's Inn Fields*.

For laying or throwing any Filth, Dung, Aſhes or Rubbiſh, in any Part thereof, to forfeit Twenty Shillings, or be committed to Priſon.

For riding or airing any Horſe or Horſes, or going round with any Carriage for breaking Horſes, to forfeit Forty Shillings, or be committed to Priſon for a Month.

For any looſe, idle, or diſorderly Perſon or Perſons running Races, or uſing any ſport or ſports in the ſaid Fields, to forfeit Forty Shillings, or be committed as in the laſt Article.

For every Perſon who ſhall break through, or get over the Rails or Fence of the Incloſure of the ſaid Fields, to forfeit the Sum of Forty Shillings, or be committed to Priſon for a Month.

For beating Carpets on the Rails, or in any Part of the Fields, the Penalty of Twenty Shillings, or be committed.

NOTICE OF PENALTIES FOR OFFENCES IN LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS—In the year 1805

larger audiences by which, as much as by his books, the world knew him."

Years after, in describing the memorable meeting, Forster says: "There was certainly no want of animation when we met. I have but to write the words to bring back the eager face and figure, as they flashed upon me so suddenly this wintry Saturday night that almost before I could be conscious of his presence I felt the grasp of his hand. It is almost all I find it possible to remember of the brief, bright meeting. Hardly did he seem to have come when he was gone. But all that the visit proposed he accomplished. He saw his little book in its final form for publication; and, to a select few brought together on Monday the 2nd of December at my house, had the opportunity of reading it aloud. . . . and when I expressed to Dickens, after he left us, my grief that he had so tempestuous a journey for such brief enjoyment, he replied that the visit had been one of happiness and delight to him. 'I would not recall an inch of the way to or from you, if it had been twenty times as long and twenty thousand times as wintry. It was worth any travel — anything! With the soil of the road in the very grain of my cheeks, I swear I wouldn't have missed that week, that first night of our meeting, that one evening of the reading at your rooms, aye, and the second reading too, for any easily stated or conceived consideration.' "

Still, ten years later, Mr. Dickens brought this home of Forster into "Bleak House," assuming that Mr. Tulkinghorn had his chambers on one of the upper floors.

"Here"—I quote from the novel—"in a large house, formerly a house of state, lives Mr. Tulkinghorn. It is let

off in sets of chambers now; and in those shrunken fragments of its greatness, lawyers lie like maggots in nuts. But its roomy staircases, passages, and antechambers still remain; and even its painted ceilings, where Allegory, in Roman helmet and celestial linen, sprawls among balustrades and pillars, flowers, clouds, and big-legged boys, and makes the head ache — as would seem to be Allegory's object always, more or less: . . .

"Like as he is to look at, so is his apartment in the dusk of the present afternoon. Rusty, out of date, withdrawing from attention, able to afford it. Heavy broad-backed old-fashioned mahogany and horsehair chairs, not easily lifted, obsolete tables with spindle-legs and dusty baize covers, presentation prints of the holders of great titles in the last generation, or the last but one, environ him. A thick and dingy Turkey-carpet muffles the floor where he sits, attended by two candles in old-fashioned silver candlesticks, that give a very insufficient light to his large room. . . .

"A fine night, and a bright large moon, and multitudes of stars. Mr. Tulkinghorn, . . . looks up casually, thinking what a fine night, what a bright large moon, what multitudes of stars! . . .

"A little after the coming of the day, come people to clean the rooms. And either the Roman has some new meaning in him, not expressed before, or the foremost of them goes wild; for, looking up at his outstretched hand, and looking down at what is below it, that person shrieks and flies. The others, looking in as the first one looked, shriek and fly too, and there is an alarm in the street. . . .

JOHN FORSTER'S HOUSE—In Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Tulkinghorn lived ("Bleak House"). It was behind these window-panes that Dickens in 1844 read "The Chimes" to Forster, Maclise, Carlyle, Jerrold, Fox, and others of his friends

"There is whispering and wondering all day, strict search of every corner, careful tracing of steps, and careful noting of the disposition of every article of furniture. All eyes look up at the Roman, and all voices murmur, 'If he could only tell what he saw!'

"He is pointing at a table, with a bottle (nearly full of wine) and a glass upon it, and two candles that were blown out suddenly, soon after being lighted. He is pointing at an empty chair, and at a stain upon the ground before it that might be almost covered with a hand. . . . For, Mr. Tulkinghorn's time is over for evermore; and the Roman pointed at the murderous hand uplifted against his life, and pointed helplessly at him, from night to morning, lying face downward on the floor, shot through the heart."

Years of soot and dust, due to the movings in and movings out of many "maggots" in their changing of "nuts," followed by a liberal use of friendly whitewash, have obliterated all traces of the "Roman" and "the outstretched hand" and "flowers" and "clouds," but the façade of the grim dignified old house is still as Charles Dickens knew it. All the more wonderful when I realise that the stealthy fingers of modern greed are within reach of its door-step. Indeed, when I last saw it in June, 1913, several ghouls, in the shape of portable boilers and erectable derricks, were squatted in a circle about it, waiting for the signal to pounce in and tear.

To-day, as I write, they may be quarrelling over its rafter bones, or drawing lots for choice bits of mantel, sash, and door.

CHAPTER XI

THE VESTRY OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, SOUTHWARK, WHERE LITTLE DORRIT AND MAGGY PASSED THE NIGHT

"Is this the church where Little Dorrit slept on the pew cushions in the vestry?"

"It is," replied the "sexton or the beadle or the verger, or whatever he was."

"Can I come in and make a drawing of the room? Not now, but on any day most convenient to you and at an hour when I shall not disturb the church service."

"Well, I don't know whether you can or not," said the verger, or the beadle, or the sexton, "we have to be very careful — particular careful. We came near being blowed up by a couple of crazy women carrying bombs or something. Orders are very strict."

"If I were searched at the door, and my match-box, scarf-pin, and penknife taken away from me, would it make any difference?"

"It might, and it mightn't. You'll have to ask the warden. You'll find him next to the fruiterer's across the way. There ain't but one, and you can't miss it."

"Can I see the vestry?"

"You can. Come in. It was over in the corner between the fireplace and the wall where they say they piled the cushions."

There is no use in my describing the room, my sketch tells the story.

Just at this juncture, a faded, half-sized little woman with a face as shrivelled as a last year's apple, one bird-claw hand gripping a dingy, black silk wrap, moved into the room. She had overheard my inquiry and wanted to be of assistance.

"I can tell you anything you want to know, sir. I've been here more than forty-six years. My name is ——— and I am in charge of the outside work of ———" and she gave me her name and occupation, both of which I forget, and which, if I could remember, I would not put into print.

"This room," she continued, "is where all the business of the church is done, and there hasn't been a tuppence spent on it since I've been here; and it looks just as it did when I first came. So I suppose it is just the same as when Maggy and Little Dorrit spent the night over there. Step this way and I'll show you the very spot. Right here between this fender and the corner of that wall. Wait, I'll move the chair."

I warmed to her at once. She did not tell me that Mr. Dickens, who, as a boy, lived in this Borough and therefore knew the inside and outside of St. George's Church, Southwark, better than he did the inside and outside of St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey, and who, in casting about for some place where Little Dorrit could rest her weary feet, had recalled this same vestry, driving in, no doubt, from Gad's

Hill (where the novel was finished) and so on across Southwark or London Bridge, stopping at the same steps at which my own cab was now waiting, and having asked for "the beadle or the verger or the sexton," just as I had asked, had, after refreshing his memory, returned home to develop the mental negative which his eyes had focussed.

No, the little, old, half-sized lady with the bird-claw hand and dried-apple face told me none of these things. She said, pointing to the corner just behind the armchair seen in my sketch, that "that was the *very spot* where Little Dorrit and Maggy had spent the night."

And she also said that the curious-looking tin scoop hanging on the wall just above the card in high light on which church notices were displayed was older than anybody knew and was still used to wash the communion service; that the double iron grating, patched and interlaced with wire, was put there a hundred or more years ago in order to protect the glass of the one window — most wicked boys having smashed some panes in days gone by; that the table occupying part of the floor space was so antiquated that the memory of the oldest inhabitant was of no earthly and perhaps of no heavenly use — vestrymen after death being sometimes difficult to locate; that outside in the church (and would I please come with her) was the very font where Little Dorrit was baptised, and if I stepped a little nearer I could put my foot on the very spot in the carpet where she stood when she was married.

She regretted having to confess that of the Marshalsea, near by, from which Little Dorrit was shut out on that eventful night, nothing was now left except a small, narrow

VESTRY OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, SOUTHWARK—In the far corner little Dorrit went to sleep on the pew cushions

archway, on one side of which I should find a sign (she would go and point it out if she hadn't so much to do that morning) saying that it was "Angel Place, leading to Bermondsey," which, if I cared to explore, would lead me through a damp, narrow alley, where printing-presses pounded away — one called the Marshalsea Press, could easily be read on a big lantern (the same as shown in my sketch); but that there was nothing else anywhere except buildings, all erected since Mr. Dickens's time, and even before Little Dorrit's creation, as could be proved by Mr. Dickens's own testimony in his preface to the novel itself.

"Some of my readers," he says (1857), "may have an interest in being informed whether or no any portions of the Marshalsea Prison are yet standing. I did not know, myself, until the sixth of the present month, when I went to look. I found the outer front court-yard, often mentioned in this story, metamorphosed into a butter-shop; and then I almost gave up every brick of the jail for lost. . . . But whosoever goes into Marshalsea Place, turning out of Angel Court leading to Bermondsey, will find his feet on the very paving-stones of the extinct Marshalsea jail; will see its narrow yard to the right and to the left, very little altered, if at all, except that the walls were lowered when the place got free; will look upon the rooms in which the debtors lived; and will stand among the crowding ghosts of many miserable years."

In the novel itself, when describing the prison as he knew it, in the days when his own father was confined within its walls, he says:

"Thirty years ago there stood, a few doors short of the

church of St. George, in the borough of Southwark, on the left-hand side of the way going southward, the Marshalsea Prison. It had stood there many years before, and it remained there some years afterward; but it is gone now, and the world is none the worse without it.

"It was an oblong pile of barrack building, partitioned into squalid houses standing back to back, so that there were no back rooms; environed by a narrow paved yard, hemmed in by high walls duly spiked at top. Itself a close and confined prison for debtors, it contained within it a much closer and more confined jail for smugglers. Offenders against the revenue laws, and defaulters to excises or customs, who had incurred fines which they were unable to pay, were supposed to be incarcerated behind an iron-plated door, closing up the second prison, consisting of a strong cell or two, and a blind alley some yard and a half wide, which formed the mysterious termination of the very limited skittle-ground in which the Marshalsea debtors bowled down their troubles."

When the dear little old lady had bidden me farewell, I bowing her out in my best Chesterfieldian manner, holding one of the big doors wide open till she passed, I went again in search of the sexton or the verger or the beadle, but that ubiquitous person had suddenly become quite offish, and his suave, most obliging manner — I mean his compound manner — had disappeared. He listened attentively to what I had to say, made no reply, and became instantly interested in the inspection of some possible dust on a pew seat across the church. Not wishing to disturb him,

I began to roam about the interior, confirming the old lady's data, and, as his absence was prolonged, I opened my "Little Dorrit" and reread that portion of the novel in which the scene in the vestry is described — the scene which was so real to the little old lady, and, now that I had seen the locality, so real to me.

"Three o'clock, and half-past three, and they had passed over London Bridge. They had heard the rush of the tide against obstacles; and looked down, awed, through the dark vapour on the river; had seen little spots of lighted water where the bridge lamps were reflected, shining like demon eyes, with a terrible fascination in them for guilt and misery. They had shrunk past homeless people, lying coiled up in nooks. They had run from drunkards. They had started from slinking men, whistling and signing to one another at bye corners, or running away at full speed. Though everywhere the leader and the guide, Little Dorrit, happy for once in her youthful appearance, feigned to cling to and rely upon Maggy. And more than once some voice, from among a knot of brawling or prowling figures in their path, had called out to the rest, to 'let the woman and the child go by!'

"So, the woman and the child had gone by, and gone on, and five had sounded from the steeples. They were walking slowly towards the east, already looking for the first pale streak of day. . . . Going round by the church, she saw lights there, and the door open; and went up the steps, and looked in.

" 'Who's that?' cried a stout old man, who was putting on a nightcap as if he were going to bed in a vault.

"'It's no one particular, sir,' said Little Dorrit.

"'Stop!' cried the man. 'Let's have a look at you!'

"This caused her to turn back again, in the act of going out, and to present herself and her charge before him.

"'I thought so!' said he. 'I know *you*.'

"'We have often seen each other,' said Little Dorrit, recognising the sexton, or the beadle, or the verger, or whatever he was, 'when I have been at church here.'

"'More than that, we've got your birth in our Register, you know; you're one of our curiosities.'

"'Indeed?' said Little Dorrit.

"'To be sure. As the child of the — by-the-bye, how did you get out so early?'

"'We were shut out last night, and are waiting to get in.'

"'You don't mean it? And there's another hour good yet! Come into the vestry. You'll find a fire in the vestry, on account of the painters. I'm waiting for the painters, or I shouldn't be here, you may depend upon it. One of our curiosities mustn't be cold, when we have it in our power to warm her up comfortable. Come along. . . . Stay a bit. I'll get some cushions out of the church, and you and your friend shall lie down before the fire. Don't be afraid of not going in to join your father when the gate opens. *I'll* call you.'

"He soon brought in the cushions, and strewed them on the ground.

"'There you are, you see. Again as large as life. Oh, never mind thanking. I've daughters of my own. And though they weren't born in the Marshalsea Prison, they

"ANGEL PLACE LEADING TO BERMONDSEY"—Part of the site of the Marshalsea jail where Dickens's father was imprisoned for debt

might have been, if I had been, in my ways of carrying on, of your father's breed. Stop a bit. I must put something under the cushion for your head. Here's a burial volume. Just the thing! We have got Mrs. Bangham in this book. But what makes these books interesting to most people is — not who's in 'em, but who isn't — who's coming, you know, and when. That's the interesting question.'

"Commendingly looking back at the pillow he had improvised, he left them to their hour's repose. Maggy was snoring already, and Little Dorrit was soon fast asleep."

When I had closed the book the compound gentleman ambled back, and before I could renew my inquiries began to voice certain difficulties — insurmountable obstacles and impregnable barriers between me and my permit. The address, once so freely offered, of the fruiterer, under whose sheltering roof the Warden was to be found when off duty, and whose permission was so absolutely necessary to me, was not, now that he came to think it over, likely to be of any service. The Warden was a vagarious individual — had numbers of places where he might or might not be found — in fact, there was not any particular place in which *he could with any certainty be found.* The best way — much the best way — would be for me to give the beadle or the sexton or the verger my card, upon which would be written the date and hour of my proposed occupancy of the room in which Little Dorrit and Maggy were *said* to have slept (the reader will kindly note the distinction between his belief in the incident and that of the little old woman); he would then present the card himself, waiting up all night if

necessary until the warden returned home, wherever that home happened to be, whether over the fruiterer's or elsewhere; and on the morrow I could return — better make it in the afternoon — say four o'clock, when he would hand me the answer.

And I did.

And this was it:

"Yes, the Warden has no objection. But he insists on one thing, and that is that you reward me handsomely before you begin work."

And the painter did — and was glad to — considering how hard the industrious night-owl had worked — dropping the coins in the outstretched palms of the sexton, the verger, or the beadle — he cannot remember which, nor does he much care.

CHAPTER XII

THE THAMES, WHERE GAFFER, ROWED BY LIZZIE HEXAM, PLIED HIS TRADE

To understand why the damp, mouldy, waterside life of the Thames should have so strongly appealed to Mr. Dickens, it is only necessary to follow in his footsteps, especially when the tide is out — and a mighty tide it is.

You think when you are crossing London Bridge to the Surrey side, your eye fixed on what you suppose is its wharf front — and we are dealing with that part of the Thames lying between Southwark Bridge and London Bridge — that all you have to do to reach the river bank is to walk along some street running at right angles to the Bridge, turn to the right, and so on down to the water's edge, where, from some pile of freight on an overloaded dock, you can study the river spread out before you.

Nothing of this is possible. The row of sullen warehouses, frowning from dull eyes under iron lids on the water traffic that sweeps past their doors, have neither wharfs nor docks. When the tide is high the cargoes are snatched from huge lighters moored close to their walls, swung through gaping doors opening on the several floors, and then whirled back on hand trucks into dark recesses. When

the tide is out these great lighters go aground on a wide, continuous mud bank hugging the foundation bricks, where, until the repentant tide returns, they lie inert, powerless, and lopsided.

To find, therefore, a coign of vantage from which a sketch expressing in the slightest degree the whirl and rush of the river traffic could be made, was difficult. After entering various doors giving on the street, tramping over acres of ground floor which seemingly promised possible exits overlooking the river, only to be confronted by colossal stacks of packing-boxes holding cans of kerosene, crates of cheese, heaps of woodenware, breastworks of tea, salt, and coffee; I brought up at last against a brick wall with every iron shutter closed tight as a burial vault.

A gleam of light shining through a mere slit, a sort of forest opening between huge piles of merchandise, finally caught my eye, and with the help of a stevedore detailed by the manager, who carried my traps, I rounded, squared, and enfiladed the conglomerate mass representing the products of half the globe and emerged in triumph on a door-sill to which was fastened a landing plank about three feet wide.

Here I could sit, so the stevedore said, until the tide turned, which would be along about noon and maybe later, when I should have to go whether the tide was on time or not, "as it was Saturday, and everything was shut chuck-a-block on Saturday at twelve, with nothing doing any more until seven o'clock on Monday morning."

My experience has taught me that you can sometimes wheedle a janitor, influence a Bobby, and occasionally per-

suade a verger to let you out by a side door before service is over; but I have never yet been able to induce any native-born Englishman, no matter what the compensation or what his occupation, to work five minutes after twelve o'clock of a Saturday afternoon. Up to that hour, then, my knock-off-at-noon stevedore would take upon himself the care of my person, seeing that no bale of cotton, or sling, full of tea, or other dangerous package, swung skyward from the bowels of a lighter, came in contact with any portion of my anatomy.

Furthermore he would impart to me certain valuable data, he having lived around here all his life and knowing every turn of the river. That was — and he pointed across the river — Cannon Station with the railroad bridge running into it; farther up was Southwark Bridge, an old iron bridge that was so old and crumbly that they didn't "let anybody walk across it" — I could just see it through the arches of the big Bridge; and that boat letting off steam was the Margate boat, and if he didn't miss his guess it would be "as full as a tick" on its next trip, being Saturday; and that half-round thing sticking up into the sky over the edge of the railroad bridge was the dome of St. Paul's; and London Bridge, of course, was right over there to the left.

This last piece of valuable information was the most important of all, for there, lying before me, was the very stretch of the river where Gaffer plied his ghastly trade.

A rumbling behind me of closing shutters warned me of the fatal hour of noon.

"Time's up, sir," was all he said as he reached for the iron ring on the wide-open door. "I'll be late for the boat.

Thank ye, sir. Come on Monday and don't forget to ask for *me*. Thank ye, sir, I'll smoke it to-morrow," and he was off.

Once outside, I wandered about the streets upon which the sudden chill of idleness had settled. Few people were to be seen and fewer trucks. I mounted the slope of the Bridge and leaned over the parapet, revelling for hours in the stir of the river. The sun had sunk in a dull mist and there was but little wind; the clouds of smoke rolling from the steamers kept abreast of their funnels, the black columns mounting straight up. Lights, large and small, like a swarm of fireflies, began to break out, speckling the great city. Night came on. In the gloom the outline of the larger masses on the opposite bank were merged into the slowly settling haze which fell like a drop-curtain, pricked here and there by pin-points of light. It was now Gaffer's hour — the hour when:

"A boat of dirty and disreputable appearance, with two figures in it, floated on the Thames, between Southwark Bridge which is of iron, and London Bridge which is of stone, as an autumn evening was closing in.

"The figures in this boat were those of a strong man with ragged grizzled hair and a sun-browned face, and a dark girl of nineteen or twenty, sufficiently like him to be recognisable as his daughter. The girl rowed, pulling a pair of sculls very easily; the man, with the rudder-lines slack in his hands, and his hands loose in his waist-band, kept an eager look-out. He had no net, hook, or line, and he could not be a fisherman; his boat had no cushion for a

THE THAMES BETWEEN SOUTHWARK BRIDGE AND LONDON BRIDGE—Where Lizzie Hexam rowed her father's boat, "Gaffer seated in the stern"

sitter, no paint, no inscription, no appliance beyond a rusty boat-hook and a coil of rope, and he could not be a waterman; his boat was too crazy and too small to take in a cargo for delivery, and he could not be a lighterman or a river-carrier; there was no clue to what he looked for, but he looked for something, with a most intent and searching gaze. The tide, which had turned an hour before, was running down, and his eyes watched every little race and eddy in its broad sweep, as the boat made slight headway against it, or drove stern foremost before it, according as he directed his daughter by a movement of his head. She watched his face as earnestly as she watched the river. But, in the intensity of her look there was a touch of dread or horror.

"'Keep her out, Lizzie. Tide runs strong here. Keep her well afore the sweep of it.'

"Trusting to the girl's skill and making no use of the rudder, he eyed the coming tide with an absorbed attention. So the girl eyed him. But, it happened now, that a slant of light from the setting sun glanced into the bottom of the boat, and, touching a rotten stain there which bore some resemblance to the outline of a muffled human form, coloured it as though with diluted blood. This caught the girl's eye, and she shivered.

"'What ails you?' said the man, immediately aware of it, though so intent on the advancing waters; 'I see nothing afloat.'

"The red light was gone, the shudder was gone, and his gaze, which had come back to the boat for a moment, travelled away again. . . .

"Always watching his face, the girl instantly answered to the action in the sculling; presently the boat swung round, quivered as from a sudden jerk, and the upper half of the man was stretched out over the stern.

"The girl pulled the hood of a cloak she wore over her head and over her face, . . . the banks changed swiftly, and the deepening shadows and the kindling lights of London Bridge were passed, and the tiers of shipping lay on either hand.

"It was not until now that the upper half of the man came back into the boat. His arms were wet and dirty, and he washed them over the side. In his right hand he held something, and he washed that in the river too. It was money. He chinked it once, and he blew upon it once. and he spat upon it once,— 'for luck,' he hoarsely said — before he put it in his pocket."

CHAPTER XIII

MR. GREWGIOUS'S OFFICE IN STAPLE INN, WHERE EDWIN DROOD DINED "ONE FOGGY NIGHT"

ONE cold, raw November day, some two years ago, when at work on the Thackeray series, I leaned over the half-door of the janitor's quarters, located just inside the archway leading to the first quadrangle of Staple Inn, his front windows overlooking Holborn, explained my purpose, was directed to the executors of the dear departed Furnival's Inn, — a great insurance company with a tender heart and an eye for the picturesque; and later on was given a character and a clerk, a most obliging and courteous clerk who became at once responsible for my further actions — and said so to the janitor.

On that occasion my purpose was to make a drawing of the inner courtyard in which Mr. Thackeray hid his mortification (if he did not cool his wrath) when, after having applied to the young Mr. Dickens for permission to illustrate "The Pickwick Papers," he was, as everybody knows, summarily turned down — a fact which he himself admitted in a speech made at a Royal Academy dinner with Mr. Dickens as one of the listeners.

I remember that on that raw November day (1912) the janitor led me through a gate, which he opened with a key,

and conducted me to a square of grass containing more cubic feet of reeking moisture to the square inch of surface than any absorbent substance with which I have thus far become acquainted; that he was good enough to bring me a plank — a wide, dry plank — on which I placed my feet, and that I sat there two mortal hours, crouched under my umbrella, only my canvas protected, the drizzling rain soaking into my very bones; the sky a grey cotton batting; the black-green trees limp and utterly disgusted with life and quite ready to be cut up into anything from kindling to cord wood so they could be warmed up — I say, I sat there until the record of an Arctic thermometer applied anywhere over my person, from my feet up, would, if accompanied by proper scientific data, have been received by any group of learned men as *prima-facie* evidence of my having first discovered the North Pole.

I remember, too, that when my sketch was finished this same janitor — God bless him — lifted me to my feet, inserted one strong, fat hand under my armpit, and helped me in my step-ladder walk to his cosy front room aglow with a blazing coal fire; that after plank-shadding and Johnny-caking both sides of me I sent him out for a small bottle of the Best Ever (Hennessy, or any old brand, it didn't matter which), and that we two then and there fraternised until there was nothing left but the smell, and very little of that.

I remember, too, that my cigar case was full — was when we commenced — and so was his cupboard — was when we fell to — and so later on were our stomachs — were when we finished; that he threw, at short intervals, intermittent

buckets of coal on the fire until he noted a January thaw developing in my face; and I remember that two days later, not having contracted pneumonia or sciatica or gangrene, that I went back and thanked him for saving my life, which, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind, he did.

And so — and this is why these interminable sentences have been written — it is not to be wondered at that when in June of the following year (1913) I, being now *persona grata*, leaned over the same half-door begging further indulgence (not for Mr. Thackeray, but for Mr. Dickens) that he should gladly have conducted me through the J. P. T. 1747 door, up a squeezed flight of wooden steps, and, on turning a knob, have ushered me into the identical office once occupied by Mr. Grewgious and Bazzard, and lighted by the very windows from which the evil face of John Jasper once peered.

All of which the obliging janitor did, expounding my purpose to the occupant in such suave, silver tones that Mr. Grewgious's successor, a smooth-shaven, full-blooded man, a quill pen gripped between his lips as a dog carries a cane, a pair of gold spectacles framing his friendly eyes, answered without a moment's hesitation:

"Why, of course; when will it be?"

"Whenever it will disturb you the least," I replied humbly.

"Then come to-morrow. We close at twelve. Saturday, you know; when you won't have a soul in or out. When you get through lock the door and hang the key on a hook outside. American, are you? Glad to see you. I got a brother in the States."

I twisted my body down-stairs, thanked him in my heart

for smashing the iron-clad rule that every Englishman's house was his castle, and now profoundly grateful for the act of Parliament which compelled him and every other Englishman to stop work on Saturday afternoon.

And not even janitors are exempt, as I learned the next day when I presented myself at the half-door.

"No, he ain't at home. He's off for the afternoon," answered his bright, cheery wife. "But I'll take ye up myself and unlock the place."

I thanked her, saw her through the door, and, picking out my point of view, started to work in the dead silence, the scratching of my coal the only sound. Soon there stole over me something of the same feeling that I had experienced the year before at Charter House when shut up in the very room in which the dear Colonel had died. Again I was alone with the ghosts of the past. Here was the window out of which Jasper craned his uncanny face; before this very fireplace had sat Mr. Grewgious on that foggy night when Edwin Drood invited himself to dinner; there, on the other side of that door, was Bazzard's room, and across the hall Mr. Grewgious's bedchamber where he lay and speculated about the ring set with diamonds and rubies which he had handed Mr. Edwin Drood "in discharge of a trust."

And it has lost nothing of its individuality nor have any changes been made in its fittings or condition: No new grate, nor mantel, nor doors; and, so far as can be seen, no fresh coat of paint upon any square foot of its surface inside or out. Even the window-panes are the same, the

MR. GREWGIOUS'S OFFICE IN STAPLE INN—("Edwin Drood")

mischievous boy not being let loose in the quadrangle of Staple Inn. More wonderful still, the gold-spectacled Englishman with the kindly face, whose hospitality I was enjoying, was so steeped in the sentiment of the place that he had not locked up so much as a scrap of paper, such confidence had he in the man "from the States" where one of his brothers lived.

And so I worked on, the brilliant June sun patterning the floor; and that my reader may share something of my own delight, when comparing the room in which I sat with Mr. Dickens's text, I will recall for him the scene which took place within these same walls on that December afternoon toward six o'clock when Staple Inn was filled with fog, and candles shed murky and blurred rays through the windows of all its then-occupied sets of chambers; . . . in one of which sat Mr. Grewgious writing by his fire . . . as did the clerk of Mr. Grewgious, in the adjoining room, writing by *his* fire. — "A pale, puffy-faced, dark-haired person of thirty, with big dark eyes that wholly wanted lustre, and a dissatisfied, doughy complexion that seemed to ask to be sent to the baker's. . . .

"'Now, Bazzard,' said Mr. Grewgious, on the entrance of his clerk: looking up from his papers as he arranged them for the night: 'what is in the wind beside fog?'

"'Mr. Drood,' said Bazzard.

"'What of him?'

"'Has called,' said Bazzard.

"'You might have shown him in.'

"'I am doing it,' said Bazzard.

"The visitor came in accordingly . . . took the easy-

chair in the corner; and the fog he had brought in with him, and the fog he took off with his greatcoat and neck-shawl, was speedily licked up by the eager fire.

"'I look,' said Edwin, smiling, 'as if I had come to stop.'

"'By-the-bye,' cried Mr. Grewgious; 'excuse my interrupting you: do stop. The fog may clear in an hour or two. We can have dinner in from just across Holborn.'. . .

"'You are very kind,' said Edwin. . . .

"'Not at all,' said Mr. Grewgious; '*you* are very kind to join issue with a bachelor in chambers, and take pot-luck. And I'll ask,' said Mr. Grewgious, dropping his voice, . . . 'I'll ask Bazzard. He mightn't like it else. Bazzard!'

"Bazzard reappeared.

"'Dine presently with Mr. Drood and me.'

"'If I am ordered to dine, of course I will, Sir,' was the gloomy answer.

"'Save the man!' cried Mr. Grewgious. 'You're not ordered; you're invited.'

"'Thank you, Sir,' said Bazzard; 'in that case I don't care if I do.'

"'That's arranged. And perhaps you wouldn't mind,' said Mr. Grewgious, 'stepping over to the hotel in Furnival's, and asking them to send in materials for laying the cloth. For dinner we'll have a tureen of the hottest and strongest soup available, and we'll have the best made-dish that can be recommended, and we'll have a joint (such as a haunch of mutton), and we'll have a goose, or a turkey, or any little stuffed thing of that sort that may happen to be

in the bill of fare — in short, we'll have whatever there is on hand.' . . .

"When Bazzard returned he was accompanied by two waiters — an immovable waiter, and a flying waiter; and the three brought in with them as much fog as gave a new roar to the fire. The flying waiter, who had brought everything on his shoulders, laid the cloth with amazing rapidity and dexterity; while the immovable waiter, who had brought nothing, found fault with him. The flying waiter then highly polished all the glasses he had brought, and the immovable waiter looked through them. The flying waiter then flew across Holborn for the soup, and flew back again, and then took another flight for the made-dish, and flew back again, and then took another flight for the joint and poultry, and flew back again, and between the whiles took supplementary flights for a great variety of articles, as it was discovered from time to time that the immovable waiter had forgotten them all. But let the flying waiter cleave the air as he might, he was always reproached on his return by the immovable waiter for bringing fog with him, and being out of breath. At the conclusion of the repast, by which time the flying waiter was severely blown, the immovable waiter gathered up the table-cloth under his arm with a grand air, and having sternly (not to say with indignation) looked on at the flying waiter while he set the clean glasses round, directed a valedictory glance toward Mr. Grewgious, conveying: 'Let it be clearly understood between us that the reward is mine, and that Nil is the claim of this slave,' and pushed the flying waiter before him out of the room."

CHAPTER XIV

THE OFFICES OF "ALL THE YEAR ROUND"; CHARLES DICKENS, EDITOR, 1859–1870

THE auctioneer, famous the world over for holding the last rites over the mortuary remains of many a defunct library, was positive that the offices of *All the Year Round* were on the corner some few streets above and that I "couldn't miss it." Another intelligent gentleman, also versed in books, was pretty positive that I *could* miss it, and with the greatest ease, as the building had been torn down these many years.

A third individual, who kept a chemist shop on the supposed site, had never once heard the magazine mentioned since he had lived here, and he would certainly have done so had there been any such publication. He knew Dickens; that is, he had heard of him . . . he was dead, of course; he supposed I knew that (I nodded assent) — had been dead some years, long before his own shop was opened. His assistant might know — he'd call him; he had a great head for remembering things.

The chemist did not raise his voice in summoning his assistant — it wasn't necessary, for that individual was hidden behind a sort of cashier's box with a half-round hole through which prescriptions were passed and against which I

was at that moment leaning. When the round knob came into view I discovered that it was partly bald, the hair having been rubbed off as far down as his ears, owing, no doubt, to constant abrasions received in the cramped quarters in which he worked; that the brush edges of two bushy eyebrows fringed a pair of silver spectacles arched over a thin, bloodless nose, two pale, sunken cheeks, and a mouth that was all puckers. The eyes, though, flashed like diamond points.

"The mistake these people make around here" — and he glanced contemptuously at his employer — "is that they mix up the two publications with which Mr. Dickens was connected. *Household Words* made its home below here in the building afterward known as the Gaiety Theatre; the office of the manager being the one in which Mr. Dickens sat. This has been torn down. The offices of *All the Year Round* you will find on Wellington; Strand. I could show you the room, but I am too busy. Is there anything else?"

He looked at me keenly, awaiting my reply, the puckers about his mouth tightening, the high light on his bare skull all the more brilliant by reason of the intellectual strain now distending the skin covering.

For a moment I hesitated. The information had been as exact as a prescription and had been given as though the formulæ were under his eyes.

"No, thank you." Again I hesitated. "But might I ask if you could give me the name of the party who at the present occupies Mr. Dickens's former editorial room so I can ——"

"Yes, you can ask it and I can give it to you, but it

won't do you any good. What you want to do is to go up two flights in a house on the opposite corner and call on Miss Dickens. Her sign is on the outside. She has a business office there and can look into the room where her grandfather used to edit the magazine, and she can do that without getting out of her seat. Tell her your story and see what'll happen. Next thing you want to do is to walk around to Henrietta Street, where you'll find Chapman & Hall, Mr. Dickens's publishers, and tell them the same thing you told Miss Dickens; then you'll find out what'll happen next. What they don't know of what's left of Mr. Dickens's day isn't worth mentioning. Is that all?"

That was all — every item, every detail. I told him so, tears of gratitude streaming down my cheeks. He screwed up both eyes, pursed his mouth until the sponge bag was tied tight, and dropped his head below the edge of the cashier's box. The proprietor took in the perspective, saw that I was alone, came out into the open, and remarked as he bowed me out: "I thought he could tell you. Knows a lot. I tell you he's got a great head. Come again. I'm glad to have helped you out." He glad to help me out! Thus it is that the deserving are robbed of their just deserts.

Into my cab once more and along one side of Covent Garden and Henrietta Street, and into an old-time publishing house — a *real* one — smelling of printer's ink, hot glue, and leather. The desks, tables, and chairs made in the year one, the mahogany kept bright by a line of editors, proof-readers, and critics going back to the Palæozoic Age; a place where the insides of unbound books are carted around on low trucks; where clerks, some in their shirt-sleeves,

pore over big ledgers, successors of other ledgers, dating from mediæval times, and sit on high stools facing high desks. A place where plate glass, gold lettering, Persian rugs, page boys in buttons, silver-plated ice-pitchers, and stuffed morocco chairs are unknown; where the very atmosphere reeks with musty traditions, and where at night myriads of ghosts, whose names and deeds are world-famous, stalk through the dusty lofts or hobnob with the shades of the presses that gave them life.

"Wait until I get my hat," was the quick reply of a member of the Real Publishing House, "and I'll go with you." (This, remember, in the busiest part of the day.)

Into the cab again. Two of us now. Along Covent Garden in full view of the very spot where Tom Pinch and his sister Ruth did their marketing, dodging the empty waggons, and so on to Wellington Street, Strand.

"There, sir" — and he pointed to the windows as seen in my sketch — "there was the editor's office of *All the Year Round*, and in that very room I used to carry Mr. Dickens's proofs when I was a boy. Our firm, as you know, were his publishers, and that is how I happen to know."

And then he recalled for me the several books, some of the proofs having passed through his own hands during the days covering the period of Mr. Dickens's editorship from 1859 to the time of his death — a long and interesting list covering "A Tale of Two Cities," "Great Expectations," and some of his shorter stories, including "Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings," "Dr. Marigold's Prescriptions," "Mugby Junction," "No Thoroughfare," "The Uncommercial Traveller," and some others — giving me, too, out of the wealth of his

reminiscences, some of the author's reasons for wishing to become his own editor.

The idea had taken possession of Dickens, he said, as early as 1845, his object being to start a periodical owned, edited, and entirely controlled by himself, through which he might not only publish his novels, but also the stories, short articles, and other writings of people whose philanthropic and humanitarian ideas were like his own. In pursuance of this plan *Household Words* saw the light on March 30, 1850, and was continued until May 16, 1859, when, owing to a regrettable piece of personal feeling on Mr. Dickens's part, the property was sold under an order in chancery and bought on behalf of Charles Dickens for £3,500, and merged into *All the Year Round*, which he had established a few months before.

He told me, too, of the many attempts made by Dickens and his friends to decide on a proper title for the new venture, among them *The Hearth, The Forge, Charles Dickens's Own*, and the final triumph as shown in an exultant letter written to Forster in which Mr. Dickens says:

"I'm dining early, before reading, and write literally with my mouth full. But I have just hit upon a name that I think really an admirable one — especially with the quotation *before* it, in the place where our present 'H. W.' quotation stands.

"'The Story of our lives, from year to year.'— *Shakespeare.*

"'ALL THE YEAR ROUND'

"A WEEKLY JOURNAL CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS."

And then he told me of another letter in which Dickens, writing from Tavistock House, said: "I have taken a new

CORNER OF WELLINGTON AND YORK STREETS OFF THE STRAND—In the second story of the rounded building Dickens edited "All the Year Round"

office; . . . have got workmen in; have ordered the paper; settled with the printer; and am getting an immense system of advertising ready. Blow to be struck on the 12th of March!"

Whether the room behind the window-panes seen in my sketch still boasts the wall-paper which the great author selected when he first moved in (it certainly must have been "wall-paper" not printing paper that was ordered in connection with the workmen) I do not know. Nor did I think it best, as the Great Head had suggested, to thrust myself and my curiosity upon Miss Dickens, the lives of distinguished descendants of distinguished people being too often made miserable by the Paul Prys of this earth. What mattered it, anyway, when the grime and soot and stain of the years are still to be seen both on the rounded nose of the old building in which her grandfather had corrected his proofs and on the measly row of houses on which Dickens looked and in one of which she herself — God bless her! — is to-day earning her living.

CHAPTER XV

CHARLES DICKENS'S GRAVE IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

HAS reverence altogether departed from us?

In China off goes your head if you prowl through certain graveyards; in Mecca it is certain death for an unbeliever to enter the shrine; in Stamboul you must either shed your shoes and slip your polluting toes into a purified Mohammedan flop-about, or you are whirled out as no better than a dog.

In the more so-called civilised parts of the earth — in St. Mark's, in the Cathedral of Seville, under the dome of St. Peter's, and other sacred buildings enshrining the dust of the great — one wanders around at will, looking over the shoulders of kneeling penitents, their breviaries in their hands, or striding across the graves of the sanctified dead, whose names and titles and often whose Coats of Arms are worn into illegibility by the tramping multitude. And it is but little better in Westminster Abbey, except at the hours of service.

As for me, I confess I could not escape a certain hesitation in approaching the holy place. Dared I ask for a permit to set up an easel before the Poet's Corner, a place

made sacred by the "congregated bones of the great men of all times"?

Yet have a sketch of Charles Dickens's grave I must, or my series would be incomplete.

So, timidly and with a certain shamed hesitancy, I began on the beadle.

He listened to my story patiently and calmly; seemed to be revolving it over in his mind; told me to abide by a certain pew until he returned; whispered confidentially in the ear of a fellow beadle, who turned me over to a sexton, who then introduced me to a verger, who said that I should come with him, which I did, the route lying through the door seen in the left hand of my sketch into an opening with columns and begrimed walls, round the outside of the Abbey, as far as a square building and up a flight of steps to a door marked "Office."

I realised now my position. I was to be confronted with a Dignitary of the Church of England; cross-examined as to my purpose in making the drawing and the uses to which it would be put; pumped dry as to my acquaintances in London; asked pointedly for references and then told to call again. I even glanced down at my clothes, wondering whether the clerk who took my card to the High Dignitary in the adjoining room would be unfavourably impressed at my appearance, whether he would make proper allowance for my painting jacket; wondering, too, whether I should not have worn my Prince Albert coat, silk hat, yellow gloves, and a gardenia in my buttonhole, and determining to do so when I called again, should I detect the slightest sign of disapproval in the Dignitary's eye.

When the clerk returned he held out to me a square piece of pasteboard on which was inscribed my name and London address.

"What am I to do with this?"

"Show it to the beadle."

"And is that all I've got to do?"

"No."

"What else?"

"Pay me two shillings and sixpence. It goes to the repair of the Abbey."

"And when can I begin work?"

"Any day between twelve and four o'clock. Good morning."

It was all over. Permits were kept on tap like peppermints in a slot-machine. All I had to do was to drop in my two and six and out would come a licence permitting me to walk over as many graves as I liked between twelve and four.

Outside the office I found the verger who had acted as guide — a patient, long-suffering, expectant verger. He, too, needed repairs; more especially about his pockets, which required relining. The sexton was also waiting. He took up his position near the door by which I left the church. He, too, was suffering, and so was the head beadle, who wore a gown and a silver chain around his neck, and who could easily have been taken for the wine man in a restaurant. He scrutinised the card, regarded me intently, seemed favourably impressed, and pointed out the precise spot where I could sit. His sufferings did not become acute until my work was finished.

I selected the view looking across the small area holding the remains of David Garrick, with those of Henry Irving in the near foreground, my shoulders brushing Shakespeare's monument, my easel and stool backed close to the base of the supporting marble. The bust of Mr. Thackeray, on the extreme right, I could barely make out. The door leading to the left the verger was good enough to keep open for me. This, with the black, dingy, time-stained benches which had been moved close together that morning and which he would have removed but for my protest, gave me two massive shadows with which to accentuate my strong foreground light, centred by Mr. Dickens's grave.

On the opening up of my easel the mob of sightseers thickened. It was evident that a live painter was infinitely more interesting than a dead poet. When the forest of legs and straight-fronts topped by bare heads and summer bonnets completely obliterated six feet of the sculptured wall facing me, I begged silently for an opening in my perspective, my hand gently waving in mid-air. This encouraged conversation.

"Can you tell me where I can find Shakespeare's monument?" came the voice of one of my countrymen, evidently from the Middle West, judging from his accent.

"You're looking at it, sir."

He was — gazing straight over my head — at the figure of the Immortal Bard done in stone, one white marble hand graciously extended as if hoping somebody would shake it.

"Oh, thank you. And can you tell me where I can find Mr. Dickens's grave?"

"You're standing on it, sir."

Another gasp and a quick movement as if he had stepped on a hot brick.

The discovery produced an oasis, the women shrinking back, the men crowding together, the oblong slab covering the ashes of the man that the world loved free for a moment from the polluting touch of irreverent feet.

This went on for an hour — up to one o'clock, in fact — when the pangs of hunger began to assert themselves. Another hour, my coal working like mad, and the space was cleared, with only the verger left and a young German officer who strutted about on his thin legs like a crane, avoiding the holiest spots. Soon they both disappeared, and I was left alone.

And with their absence the spell of the marvellous interior fell upon me. The kind of awe which appealed to Washington Irving when the magnitude of the building broke fully upon his mind.

"The eye gazes with wonder," he writes, "at clustered columns of gigantic dimensions, with arches springing from them to such an amazing height. It seems as if the awful nature of the place presses down upon the soul, and hushes the beholder into noiseless reverence."

And yet none of this seems to have impressed Mr. Dickens — not in this same way — nor would he have chosen Westminster Abbey as his last resting-place could he have been consulted.

"He would . . . have preferred," says Forster in describing the causes which led up to his burial in the Sanctu-

CARTE-DE-VISITE PHOTOGRAPH OF DICKENS—Taken in Philadelphia, at the time of his readings there, and now first published

ary and the ceremonies that followed, "to lie in the small graveyard under Rochester Castle wall, or in the little churches of Cobham or Shorne; but all these were found to be closed; and the desire of the Dean and Chapter of Rochester to lay him in their Cathedral had been entertained, when the Dean of Westminster's request, and the considerate kindness of his generous assurance that there should be only such ceremonial as would strictly obey all injunctions of privacy, made it a grateful duty to accept that offer. The spot already had been chosen by the Dean; and before midday on the following morning, Tuesday the 14th of June, with knowledge of those only who took part in the burial, all was done. The solemnity had not lost by the simplicity. Nothing so grand or so touching could have accompanied it, as the stillness and the silence of the vast Cathedral. Then, later in the day and all the following day, came unbidden mourners in such crowds, that the Dean had to request permission to keep open the grave until Thursday; but after it was closed they did not cease to come, and 'all day long,' Doctor Stanley wrote on the 17th, 'there was a constant pressure to the spot, and many flowers were strewn upon it by unknown hands, many tears shed from unknown eyes.' He alluded to this in the impressive funeral discourse delivered by him in the Abbey on the morning of Sunday the 19th, pointing to the fresh flowers that then had been newly thrown (as they still are thrown, in this fourth year after the death), and saying that 'the spot would thence forward be a sacred one with both the New World and the Old, as that of the representative of the

literature, not of this island only, but of all who speak our English tongue.'"

The stone placed upon it is inscribed:

CHARLES DICKENS.

Born February the Seventh 1812. Died June the Ninth 1870.

The spell of the mighty mausoleum still upon me, I pushed aside my easel and looked silently on the tomb before me, repeating to myself the line of Lord Bacon:

"Death openeth the gate to good fame
And extinguisheth envy."

A line eminently fitting to be remembered in the presence of the illustrious dead; for if any one of the goodly company whose names and effigies were about me had, by their achievements, "won fame and extinguished envy," it could certainly be said of Charles Dickens. If, when his light first began to flame, any such jealousy existed, it was soon replaced by sincere and undying gratitude. I for one can never repay the debt I owe him — and this debt is one of a lifetime, for I am only one year younger than his first published book. And then, what very dear friends he has given me: Sam Weller, Dot Peerybingle, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim, Peggotty, Little Em'ly, Lizzie Hexam, Sarah Gamp, Micawber, Mark Tapley, David Copperfield — each and every one a welcome guest in my household! I can hear my father's voice now as he read aloud the "Christmas Carol,"

DICKENS'S GRAVE, WESTMINSTER ABBEY

and I can still feel a tear trickle down my cheek when Tiny Tim's "active little crutch was heard upon the floor."

I can hear, too, the tones of the author's voice as I listened to him in New York on that snowy night in December, 1867, when, to quote his letter to his daughter, "there were at nine o'clock in the morning, 3000 people in waiting and they had begun to assemble in the bitter cold as early as two o'clock in the morning." I remember the choke in his throat and his very gesture when, as Doctor Marigold, he laid out the imaginary wares of the imaginary Cheap John on the reading-desk before him, and can recall his every intonation in the closing paragraphs of his wonderful story when the child of his blind ward, Sophy, clambered up the steps of his Cheap John's cart.

"Looking full at me, the tiny creature took off her mite of a straw hat, and a quantity of dark curls fell about her face. Then she opened her lips, and said in a pretty voice: —

"'Grandfather!'

"'Ah my God!' I cries out, 'she can speak.'

"In a moment Sophy was around my neck as well as the child, and her husband was wringing my hand with his face hid, and we all had to shake ourselves together before we could get over it. And when we did begin to get over it, and I saw the pretty child a talking, pleased and quick and eager and busy, to her mother, in the signs that I had first taught her mother, the happy and yet pitying tears fell rolling down my face."

THE END

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